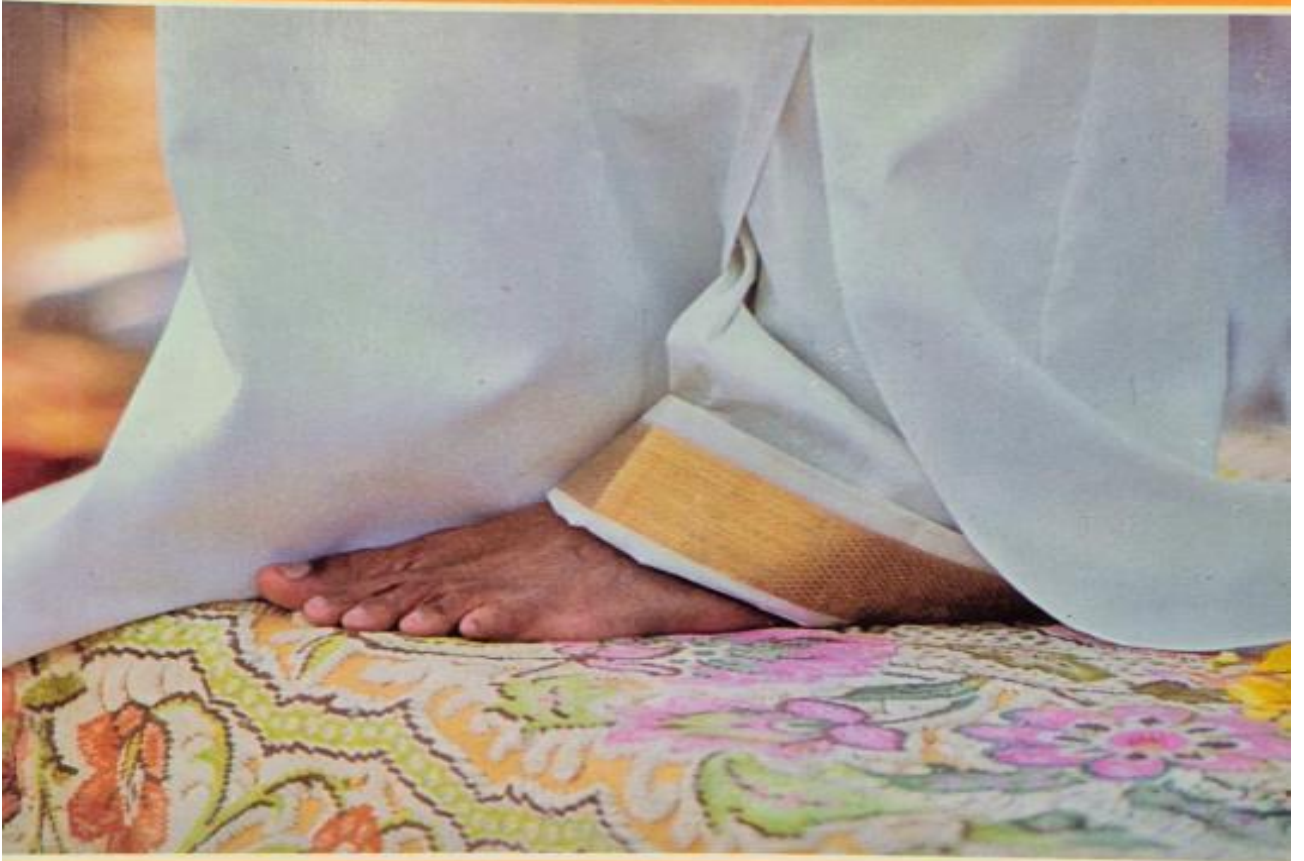
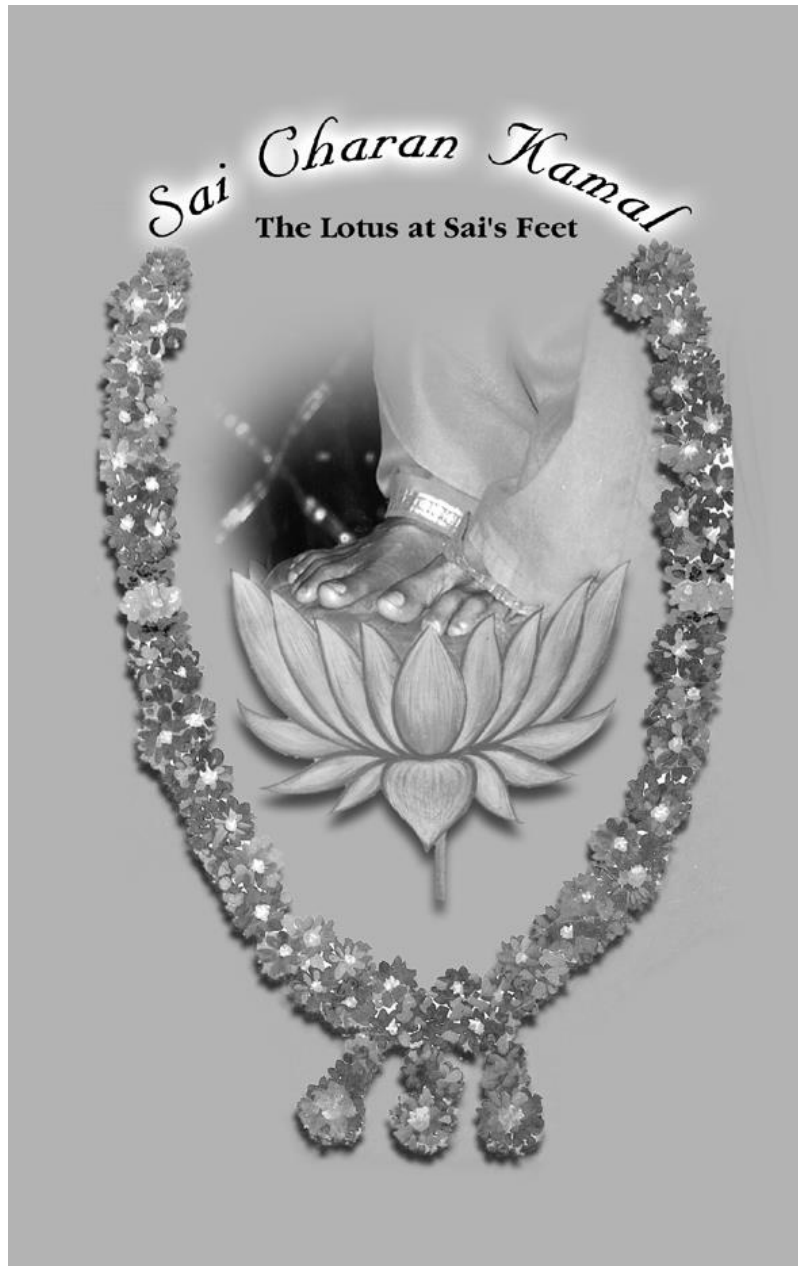


Sai Charan Kamal

The Lotus at Sai's Feet





Dedicated at the Lotus Feet of My Beloved Lord

By Sarla Joshi

Translated By R. Sai

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OM SAI RAM

FOREWORD

With Sai's grace Kamal Dixit's wonderful experiences were compiled and stored, as they occurred, by hand in notebooks by her worshipful guru Anna Maharaj. I was blessed with the incalculable good fortune of residing at Shetphale with Kamal and being able to read those notes for ten days in August 1983.

On countless occasions I had acquainted other women and fellow members of my study circle with Kamal's peerless and unique experiences. These discourses proved extremely beneficial, assisting in revealing to them their appropriate spiritual path. On hearing this superlative story they were tremendously overwhelmed, hence their request to me to actually compile a book of Kamal's experiences.

This book is its own prelude and introduction. It concerns Kamal's personal experiences with God, related in her own simple and charming style. With the intention of making the mysteriously, profound narratives and expositions more easily understandable, I have purposefully adopted a conversational style. I have limited myself to the space of five years in chronological order between 1975 and 1980, choosing the more relevant, stately, noble and interesting experiences only.

To enable the reader to easily comprehend the divinely poignant wisdom inherent and yet hidden behind these enigmatic experiences I have utilised a simple, learned yet modern prose language style. I sincerely hope that readers will welcome my efforts.

I was in receipt of invaluable assistance, encouragement and stimulation from Anna Maharaj in the cataloguing and compilation of this book. The book appears incomplete without a photograph of Anna Maharaj and an abridged version of his life. Acquiescing to my entreaties this shortcoming was fulfilled by Anna Maharaj's daughter, Shakutai Datye. My special and heartfelt gratitude is owed to those whose assistance proved invaluable namely Mrs Gumbar, Major Rajan, Sri Rajvansi and Major Acharya. This book's successful completion is due entirely to their indefatigable exertions. I am eternally grateful to them.

My sincere hope is that the readers will assimilate each and every precious word of the Sai leelas presented in this book, and that they will then contemplate upon and endeavour to practise them thereby greatly benefiting from this feast of devotion. May Sri Sathya Sai Baba's grace be fully bestowed upon the readers.

—Sarla Joshi

Sab dharti kagad karun, Lekhni sab banrai
Saat samundra masi karun, Guru guna likha na jaye

If the earth be the writing leaf,
If all the forests be the pen,
If the seven seas be the ink,
Even then the excellence of the Guru cannot be extolled.

–**Kabir Das**

INTRODUCTION

The earnest desire and impatience of Sai devotees to read or hear about the illustrious majesty of their Sadguru, Sri Sathya Sai Bhagawan, is known only to them. To their yearning hearts Sai leela's, Sai glories and Sai grandeur is an ambrosial nectar. Every individual devotee is blessed with unique personal experiences to correspond with and complement their worthiness and particular spiritual developmental stage. Fortunately graced indeed are the devotees who attain the lofty state of total surrender and sacrifice at the lotus feet of beloved Sai, offering themselves like a beautiful rose. One such is 'Kamal' who has willingly surrendered her soul to the Lord and is the subject of this book. The reading audience is probably eager for a background introduction to the family of one whose unusual and supernatural experiences are being recounted.

The narrative concerns my beautiful heroine whose name is Kamal. She was born in the Sangali district in a tiny village known as Jadhebari, three miles from the nearest major town Khanapur. Her father's name is Gundaparavji. In conformance with the customs prevailing in small outlying villages, Kamal's marriage was performed at the tender age of twelve years. Her future husband's name was Vitthal Ramchand Dixit, and he resided in the village of Shetphale. Her husband's first wife had died leaving behind a daughter; therefore, her husband was considerably older than her. In fact, some thirty years older at the time of the marriage. Vitthal Ramchand's two other brothers Sri Dhar and Sri Atmaram are both married and reside within the same generously proportioned house which has been conveniently divided into three sections served by a communal verandah. Notwithstanding this and although all the culinary and catering arrangements are separate, they all live together in love and harmony. Working together they alternate between the family farms and goldsmith shop.

The village of Shetphale is inordinately benefited by the presence of Mama Maharaj's ashram, mandir and his preachings of the Bhagvat. Virtually all the members of Kamal's family are devoted to Mama Maharaj and have therefore been initiated into a guru mantra by this immanent, self-realised local saint. In spite of the fact that they are all illiterate they selflessly participate in, and contribute towards, the festival celebrations at the ashram. Kamal herself is only semiliterate but owing to the rays of the illuminating lamp of knowledge ignited by Mama Maharaj the atmosphere in their home is pervaded by repetition of japa, meditation, ritual worship and paduka puja. Following her marriage Kamal noticed this intense religious fervour and expressed a desire to carry out paduka puja. However, her two sister-in-laws promptly advised Kamal that in order to receive her own unique benefit from pursuing this worship she was required to formally accept guru mantra from Anna Maharaj (Mama Maharaj's appointed successor). Kamal immediately approached Anna Maharaj to solicit permission to worship the padukas. Anna Maharaj gently explained that until formal and sincere devotions are undertaken this particular worship cannot be

commenced. Kamal pleaded that she be instantly initiated into the necessary devotions and disciplines. Refusing to accept a negative reply she cried beseechingly. Anna Maharaj attempted to mollify her, “Kamal you are extremely young and uneducated therefore it will be impossible for you to comprehend the meanings and enigmatic mysteries of devotional activities. Once you are a little older, I promise I’ll initiate you into a guru mantra.” But Kamal’s heart was resolved, and she shed tears unceasingly. In no way was she prepared to accept even a temporary rebuff. Anna Maharaj was left with no option but to relent. And so, on the 22nd of December 1963 Kamal was ritually initiated into a guru mantra by Anna Maharaj.

Kamal dedicatedly performed her prayers, worship, japa of fifteen malas a day (108 x 15) of the maha mantra, paduka puja, various other forms of worship and fasts in accordance with the disciplines and illumination pervading her sincerely devoted heart. Surpassing faith, allegiance and love towards her sadguru were virtues clearly evident within Kamal. With intense love, respect and devotional feelings Kamal never missed any opportunity to invite her sadguru to her home whenever he visited Shetphale on a festival occasion or on some errand. Kamal humbly and respectfully offered her guru worship, aarthi and whatever other arrangements and provisions she could offer at each and every possible opportunity.

CHAPTER I

The First Experiences Of Sri Sathya Sai Baba's Grace

In 1975, when Kamal's two sons were eight and six years of age, she developed a disorder of the uterus and was admitted into a hospital in Sangali. Following an examination the doctors were optimistic that perhaps an operation might be dispensed with. Issuing a supply of medication they released Kamal from hospital. Unfortunately, the treatment failed to take effect even after many days.

It was then that Anna Maharaj offered Kamal a small container of vibhuti, instructing her in its application. Henceforth Kamal would diligently apply the vibhuti to her forehead and consume a small quantity everyday after her bath. Within days her condition improved and finally the malady disappeared altogether, leaving her perfectly healthy. In response to this miraculous cure, Kamal's faith naturally developed and increased in the vibhuti and Sai Baba. At this time Anna Maharaj had been instructing the local villagers in Sai bhajans and Sai stories whilst distributing small books for their perusal and information. Many people, prompted by their faith in the guru, had acquired belief in Sai Baba. Amongst these Kamal was foremost. As her guru's unparalleled disciple Kamal's faith was unshakeable for she unquestioningly, implicitly trusted in Anna Maharaj's words. Right from the beginning Kamal's faith was inordinately phenomenal. Gradually she learned to sing bhajans and subsequently would hold bhajans at her home every Thursday and Ekadashi day. Initially, certain family members and neighbours considered this bhajan singing a subject for general amusement and ridicule.

Lack of monetary resources debarred Kamal from framing one of Baba's photographs. However, where yearning is sincere the Lord Himself provides, and so within a few days the necessary funds were acquired by studious household management and the photograph duly framed to Kamal's satisfaction. Henceforth, her devotion increased daily in leaps and bounds. Unable to read herself, Kamal persuaded her brother-in-law's young daughter Mangal to read Sathyam, Shivam, Sundaram to her. Eventually with immense exertion she applied herself and mastered the complexities of reading and writing to a limited degree and proceeded reading the book with single pointed rapt enthusiasm. While so engaged Kamal conceived an inexpressibly acute yearning for Baba's pratyaksh darshan. An impossibility, as both her husband and parents' family were highly sceptical of Baba's supposed divinity. But since God Himself had irrevocably determined to quench Kamal's thirst the word impossible becomes a misnomer. The ocean of compassion that is Sai Ram heeded the prayers of His beloved devotee and invited her to His residence at Puttaparthi.

With this express intention, in 1976 Baba utilised Anna Maharaj as His instrument in the fulfilment of Kamal's consummate craving for darshan. That year Anna Maharaj visited Shetphale earlier than expected, before Navratri, to celebrate the festival of Dassera. Kamal, becoming aware of Anna Maharaj's projected visit to Puttaparthi, promptly requested permission to accompany him. Anna Maharaj, perceiving her inquisitiveness, depth of earnestness, love and devotion complied with this proposal. In the light of Anna Maharaj's select company and

approval the family reluctantly consented. A number of other villagers also prepared themselves to join the pilgrimage. At long last the day of departure finally arrived. Kamal's family contrived numerous arguments and stratagems to prevent Kamal from joining the entourage. Social etiquette forbade her from speaking up for herself and so Kamal, concentrating all her heart and thoughts on Him and silently weeping, beseeched her adorable Lord to remove these obstacles and grant her darshan without further delay.

Kamal's exuberance, joy, enthusiasm and delight was immeasurable as she set foot on the sacred soil of Puttaparthi. All the pilgrims at Prasanthi were enthralled into exhilaration by Baba's discourse, presented originally in Telegu but concurrently translated into English for the benefit of foreigners. But to poor Kamal the whole affair, English or Telegu, was beyond her comprehension as she understood neither language. Love is its own language however and with a silent unheralded exchange of love between God and devotee Kamal was overwhelmingly flooded with joy. Soon, however, the yearning for the touch of His pure holy feet agitated her mind as her heart wept its deepest desire. It appeared that the prospect of Kamal's wish being fulfilled was remote indeed, for at festivals Baba rarely granted interviews or even padanamaskar. A convention that He perhaps cultivated due to the enormous influx of devotees from the four corners of the earth on such occasions. Painstakingly Kamal had written a four-line letter, and she would expectantly sit in the front rows during darshan with her companions, awaiting the much-coveted opportunity of padanamaskar. Every day Kamal was bitterly disappointed. This state of affairs continued for three to four days. Baba nonchalantly, always seemed to miss their particular row. Eventually, Kamal arrived at the conclusion that if it were Baba's wish, darshan and padanamaskar would be offered to her regardless of where she sat. She decided she would sit in the very back rows during darshan. Characteristically Baba, avoiding the front rows, came up to her that very day. Responding to the aching heart of His devotee, He glided across to where Kamal sat with her head bowed in a morass of sorrow and stood directly behind her with His knees gently brushing her back. Oblivious, Kamal was immersed in her own torment unaware that the object of her yearning stood so enticingly close. Desperately she beseeched, supplicating mentally, 'Baba, I am not worthy of touching Your feet being an illiterate foolish villager. Even so my mind fervently craves that my forehead be placed upon Your holy feet, and I may look up at Your enchanting face to my heart's content. It is my single deepest desire. However, if I am so base a sinner, Your pure feet so above me, then by all means take hold of my ears, slap me or kick me with Your lotus feet. At least so I will have the advantage of Your charansparsh.'

Alerted by the persons around her of Baba's presence behind her, Kamal's spirit soared, flooding the entirety of her being. Immediately swinging around, her eyes locked onto the beloved face of the Lord. The whole world around her dissolved into nothingness as Kamal was immersed in the unique bliss of His presence.

This is the invariable experience of all who lay eyes on the Lord. They formulate their entreaties and questions, intending to accost Him as soon as He approaches. But one glance, one solitary glimpse of His beguiling countenance and the probing questions die a sudden death plummeting into the chasms of subconsciousness. As the providential chance slips away, one recovers one's senses too late. Kamal was brought back to reality by the volunteers and by Baba Himself as He gestured indicating His feet.

“Here, fulfil your wish. Clasp these holy feet and make this birth of yours pure and fruitful. Who knows if this golden opportunity will present itself again or not,” He said.

Regaining control of her mental faculties Kamal embraced those adorable feet tenaciously and placed her head upon them becoming oblivious of anything else in the whole of creation.

This is the common experience of all devotees. At that momentous moment it appears ‘The world is mine. No-one shall part me from this haven of heaven. Let me drink until my heart is satiated.’ But alas a mere few seconds later one is thrust harshly back into the reality of the world. Similarly Kamal was separated from Baba’s lotus feet. However, she was the recipient of a depth and magnitude of such indescribable supreme joy that she buoyantly sailed upon this ocean of bliss, diving deep to savour the sweetness and gently rising to float weightlessly on its surface again.

On conclusion of the Dassera programme, the pilgrims reluctantly retraced their steps homeward. On their return all devotees tend to have their minds preoccupied by the essence and atmosphere of the recent events at Puttaparthi, and their thoughts drenched in unbelievable bliss. Eventually worldly occupations and considerations impinge upon them and the dreary drudgery of life recommences. The majority of people are entangled back into their private lives to so great an extent that these superlative experiences are retained only as a fragrant memory. Stored in the archives of their dusty minds in a remote corner closet like a rare and beautiful fabric or an exquisitely scented perfume bottle. A few, however, manage to infuse some of that sublimity into the melody of their daily lives, creating an atmosphere of mellifluous harmony.

Truly sincere Sai devotees are easily recognizable by these rare traits. Outwardly their lives are scarcely altered to any noticeable degree but internally a new and wonderful way of living life is discovered. They forge an unbreakable bond with Baba. He is everywhere in their daily occupations. A Sai Ram on arising, a Sai Ram when seated, eating, drinking, thinking. Every second they are plunged into the depths of their Lord. Therefore, what obstacle could possibly keep them from their Sai? Baba is ever present in such laudable homes. It is simply a question of understanding.

Kamal’s allegiance and devotion indisputably belonged to Baba. However, a significant incident occurred prior to her trip to Puttaparthi which strengthened her faith in Baba considerably. It also illustrates Baba’s omnipresence which concretely manifests at the heartfelt prayer of a devotee. It has previously been mentioned that Anna Maharaj presented Kamal with a vibhuti container, and it was Kamal’s disciplined practice to daily apply it to her forehead and also consume a little. As with all materials of this transient world a few months later the vibhuti finished. Kamal was deeply distressed.

I am well aware that many readers will be surprised at the relevance of the phrase ‘deeply distressed’. Why deeply distressed? You deliberate as to whether it is a bodily inconvenience or a monetary loss! The moving away of a dearly beloved family member. Why express deep sorrow over what is after all of only minor importance? Why ponder and worry over it? No doubt more vibhuti can be obtained from the original source! There is no necessity for undue depression.

Therein lies the distinction between us and Kamal. Only when we have achieved the highly immanent state of Kamal's faith, devotion and trust will we experience this 'deep distress'.

Personally, I have not attained the elevated spiritual reaches which Kamal has obviously scaled. However, with your permission I will indulge in relating a short story about myself, which parallels Kamal's distress at the lack of vibhuti. In 1974 I desired to celebrate the Ganesh festival but owing to the education of my children I had been living all alone for the past nine years, my husband being away working. Several years later, with everyone reunited, we had the opportunity of living together as a family. Even so my husband's frequent absences created obstacles to the fulfilment of my wish. One year the opportunity presented itself to collect all the family members together and so I determined to celebrate the festival with all due pomp and ceremony. Twice daily puja, aarthi and prasad, all were offered in accordance with my wishes. Joyfully it was conducted and showers of joy were the result as many other local children congregated every day for the aarthi, thoroughly enjoying all the proceedings. On the ultimate day the Ganesh moorthi is usually formally abandoned in running water. As the children departed with it on their errand, I was dumbfounded by what came over me, for I sobbed and wept as if in truth a close loving friend was leaving. The children were loudly chanting the Ganesh bhajan 'Ganpati bappa moraya pudhchya varshilavkar ya. (Ganesh Bhagawan return quickly)'. It was on that day that the intrinsic, literal import of those words truly penetrated the recesses of my mind, undeniably Ganeshji was leaving us for a whole year. It became of vital importance that Ganeshji be informed that the intervening year of expectancy would weigh heavily on me, therefore he was to speedily return. Giving expression to my thoughts I cried inconsolably.

An incomprehensible display! Is it not so? Indeed, there do exist sorrows of this enigmatic nature and the end of the vibhuti was one such. Continuing with our story, Kamal realised that more vibhuti could only be acquired on Anna Maharaj's return. Hence her state of mental anguish. With a heavy heart, succumbing to anxiety, she reopened the container, full of trepidation, only to be astounded to discover it full to the brim. In fact, the vibhuti overflowed over her hands as if endowed with a life of its own. Although she was awestricken and amazed, she refrained from mentioning this to anyone at home. She was well aware that they would amuse themselves at what they would assume to be her fabrication or respond with ridiculous conjectures. Kamal confided her secret only to Anna Maharaj on his next visit. However, the family soon became curious, marvelling at the mystery of the everfull vibhuti container. Kamal compromised, appeasing them with the tale of another larger container from which she repeatedly filled the smaller container. Unknown to all, Baba's immeasurable grace had gifted Kamal with an ever full vibhuti container. This was Kamal's first experience of Baba's miracles. Thereafter she became the mistress of miracles.

One afternoon at four, Kamal arrived at Anna Maharaj's Vasudev Mandir and became witness to an exchange between a very elderly toothless stranger and the mandir administrator, Sri Annatrav. The old man requested something to eat but the administrator, could find nothing suitable to offer. Therefore, he solicitously suggested that the beggar enquire at the goldsmith's house (Kamal's husband's house) where he would most definitely be fed. Without seeking directions or any further information as to the whereabouts of the goldsmith's house, this

apparent stranger to the district left for Kamal's house. Critically observing the above Kamal thought 'I will see where he goes for he has not even sought the directions to my house.'

Judiciously employing an alternative route, she reached home just as the old man arrived. Requesting him to be seated Kamal entered the house. She returned with a chappati and curry for him. Having thus catered to her unexpected visitor, Kamal returned inside to continue her household chores, completely forgetting the presence of the strange visitor. Half an hour ticked by before Kamal suddenly recollected her guest and her own omission in providing the correct customary hospitality. Rushing out to enquire if there were any further requirements she was surprised to see that he had only just placed the last morsel into his mouth and was preparing to wash his hands. Irritated at her own thoughtlessness Kamal admonished, "Why didn't you ask for more?"

"My stomach is full and I'll go now," he replied.

Concluding his ablutions, he patted Kamal on the back with a 'well done' and stepping out he took the road to Kardhani village. Kamal gazed in stupefaction at his remarkable agility for one so aged. 'How can such an elderly man walk so quickly?' she thought. 'Where has he come from and where is he going?' She raced upstairs onto the flat roof of her house to spy his direction and whereabouts. As there were no obstructing buildings in the vicinity, Kamal could see clearly for two miles around. A sneaking suspicion flashed across her mind that perhaps this was Baba. She swiftly sought the direction he had taken and, spotting him, she stared in unblinking wonderment, for the old man stopped and furtively looked around him. Convinced of his solitary state he immediately gestured with his hand, adding 'go, go, go back' upon which he mysteriously vanished from sight.

Approximately nine months had passed since Kamal's visit to Puttaparthi and pratyaksh darshan. Her devotion grew in leaps and bounds to an unusually elevated degree. Correspondingly her miraculous experiences became more frequent, poignant and diverse. Now commenced the uninterrupted shakshatkar darshans of the Lord including the exceptional programme of a flute being played regularly at 2am every night.

CHAPTER 2

1st August 1977

Eight to ten days prior to the 1st of August and the incident narrated below the following conversation took place between Kamal and Baba.

“One morning I’ll come into your kitchen to grant darshan, not in a human form but in another life form,” said Baba.

“Around here there are millions of insects creeping and crawling all over. How am I to know of Your presence in that one particular form?” asked Kamal.

“If I assume the form of an ant I’ll bite you. Whichever form I employ I’ll ensure that in some manner you are made aware of My presence,” Baba promised.

On the morning in question Kamal was busily engaged with her usual chores in the kitchen when unexpectedly a bumble bee flew in, alighting close to Kamal’s hand. The instant Kamal gently touched it, it took flight. Kamal then glanced down and noticed vibhuti on her hand. Appreciating this as fulfilment of Baba’s promise to appear in another guise, Kamal was nevertheless deeply disturbed at missing an opportunity to formally worship Him. However, as it was Baba’s practice to present Himself each night at two o’clock to play the flute, Kamal expectantly waited and immediately raised the subject of the morning’s events on His arrival. “I am grieved at being unable to offer You worship in that particular form,” she lamented.

“Do not differentiate between forms. Tomorrow I will accept your puja in that form,” He advised and consoled.

The following day, after having accepted her devotionally offered worship, Baba asked, “Why do you discriminate between Me and Anna Maharaj. It is erroneous to do so. I am present in the padukas you daily worship because Anna Maharaj, Mama Maharaj and I are all one. Establish this truth in your mind. In future I will visibly and practically reveal this to you.” Having expounded this profound, divine philosophy Baba melodiously played the flute and departed.

8th August 1977

This singularly unique incident was experienced by both Kamal and Anna Maharaj. Accompanied by her three friends Kamal went to pay her respects to Anna Maharaj between seven and eight o’clock in the evening. Their conversation centred around a serious consideration of Baba’s recent disclosure that Baba, Anna Maharaj and all the other divine deities were one. Having formally prostrated themselves they were seated when suddenly Anna Maharaj experienced the distinct sensation of affinity with Shirdi Sai Baba. He had been seated, but now raised himself and stood straight, fully affirmed in the belief that he was in fact Shirdi Sai Baba. Within moments, Kamal also experienced a similar intuitive awareness that Anna Maharaj was Shirdi Sai Baba. This poignant and emotional experience continued for five minutes. Following this they then both had an inexplicable but irresistible understanding that Anna Maharaj was the embodied form of Sathya Sai Baba. This absorbing and soul stirring belief persisted for a further ten minutes. Subsequently they both experienced a realisation that Anna Maharaj was Sri

Krishna. Kamal was blessed with an accompanying physical vision. Lost in the whirlpool of cosmic timelessness they were both submerged in an impalpable extra sensory transcendent bliss. Eventually Anna Maharaj seated himself and presented his feet. Kamal made obeisance placing her head upon them. Receiving supreme and rapturous bliss, both felt themselves to be disembodied, floating in sublimity, oblivious to worldly considerations and their surroundings. Kamal remained at her guru's feet and he in turn observed an unbroken silence for ten minutes. The persons assembled around were no doubt unable to fathom the depth of these supernatural events being enacted in their presence, but they could have some approximate estimation with their relatively simple understanding of the unearthly occurrences. The atmosphere, being so charged with divinity, almost all present, could, to a degree, experience the sacred vibrations. They too felt elevated above their mundanity, and part of a transcendently divine experience for which they were humbly grateful, considering themselves fortunate to be present.

14th August 1977

According to His usual routine Baba arrived at two o'clock that night. He played the flute and then requested Kamal to bring Anna Maharaj's ring to Him. The following day on conclusion of the discourse and bhajan at the mandir, but before returning home, Kamal respectfully approached Anna Maharaj and presented Baba's request. Anna Maharaj happily complied. The next night when Baba came, He took the ring in His hand and at the same time swiftly created a huge pile of similar rings before Kamal. Baba generously offered, "Here, you may keep all these."

Before departing from Puttaparthi Kamal had purchased a ring for one rupee featuring Baba's photograph which she now constantly wore. "Baba I already have this ring. What would I do with another one? I do not need a ring. Only return to me Anna Maharaj's ring which You have hidden in this heap," she replied.

"The whole pile is before you. So, you choose a ring of your choice and give it to him," said Baba.

Kamal selected a simple ring picturing a snake with the word 'Ram' embossed on it. Baba took the ring and placed it on His own finger. Then from the original ring Baba materialised a mass of golden idols of Ram, Krishna, Ganesha and numerous other deities in front of Kamal. He informed Kamal that she might keep them all.

"What would I do with all these? I want only You," she said. Baba remained thoughtfully silent. Then, playing His flute, He departed.

Early next morning Kamal was surprised to notice that instead of the 'Ram' ring she had chosen, Anna Maharaj's own ring had been replaced. Confused, Kamal retained the ring, not returning it to Anna Maharaj, determined to question Baba on the exchange. That night when Baba made His appearance Kamal promptly asked, "Why did You do this? You gave back the first ring! Why insist I choose a ring when You intended to return the original?"

"First, were I to change the ring people would needlessly gossip about it, and second, I have conclusively revealed to you that the ring itself is the essence of 'Ram'. That is why I

created all the other deities from it to show you. Now, with the appropriate mantra you place this ring upon Anna Maharaj's finger," replied Baba.

The mantra recommended by Baba was 'Om tat sat sri narayan tu, purushotam guru tu'. By repetition Baba ensured that it was memorised by Kamal. The following day when the ring was presented to Anna Maharaj, he was slightly disappointed. Sensitive to her guru's silent thoughts she promised, "Tomorrow I will insist that Baba change the ring for another."

At home Kamal kept the ring in a chest for safe keeping. Even so a short while later she developed an insistent urge to recheck the ring. However, on opening the chest she was confronted with a vacant place where the ring had been. It had vanished. Kamal was undismayed for she was unequivocally positive that this was Baba's handiwork. She remembered that before this the letter which she had written to Baba in Puttaparthi, which He had not accepted then, had similarly disappeared from the same chest on her return from that holy pilgrimage. Subsequently it was returned ten days after she had spoken to Baba. Unconcerned, she engaged herself in her daily routine, confident of the whereabouts of the ring. She eagerly anticipated the approaching evening. On Baba's appearance she unnecessarily listed the whole day's events and beseeched Baba for a different ring for Anna Maharaj. Baba ambiguously persisted in stating that this particular ring was 'Ram' and that Anna Maharaj must perforce accept it. However, in Baba's inimitable style the ring was not returned then, but only transported back to the chest a few days later. Retrieving the ring Kamal attended upon Anna Maharaj and on returning the ring recounted all the recent facts.

"If you wish, shall I try once more for Baba to change the ring?" she asked.

"No, I am quite content, so place the ring on my finger," said Anna Maharaj. So in accordance with Baba's injunction Kamal placed the ring on Anna Maharaj's finger while reciting the mantra. Once more, at that instant, Anna Maharaj experienced a dimensional transformation to the Sai persona. Both Kamal and Anna Maharaj were overwhelmed by blissful beatitude.

8th September 1977

Early that morning at approximately seven fifteen Kamal departed by bus for Gomevadi. Enroute, she had the distinct impression that her guru Maharaj was conversing with her. Alighting at her destination Kamal thought 'What did Anna Maharaj say?' She failed to remember. Desperately trying to recollect the precious words, she became mentally perturbed. Dizzy, she sat down by the roadside. In actual fact she had come to attend the formal ceremony of mundan (shaving of the first hair) of her cousin's son. Her other cousin had come to fetch her from the bus station. He had observed her leaving the bus and sitting down. Concerned, he approached and questioned her on her unusual behaviour. But his queries fell upon deaf ears as they failed to register in Kamal's distraught mind, nor was she capable of formulating a coherent reply. Kamal's agitation was visibly apparent on her face as her eyes darted this way and that. His brotherly solicitude over her strange condition turned to bafflement, and he consequently decided that she should be quickly taken home and assigned to the care of the elderly women there. The natural inquisitiveness of the public had been aroused, and a crowd had already assembled around

them. Therefore, thinking quickly, he took Kamal's hand and hustled her home where he resigned his responsibility to the wise old women, after offering a brief explanation.

In their wisdom the old women seated her in a room alone, recommending tea and food as a restorative. Kamal declined the offer, as she was temporarily in a somewhat comatose state. All their solicitous enquiries failed to elicit a response from Kamal. Owing to the ceremony in progress and the large contingent of guests they were unable to spend further time tackling Kamal's disorder, so they locked her in a solitary room in her uncle Kulkarni's house. Two to three hours later her menstrual cycle began. Recollecting their guest at roughly seven thirty in the evening, her family visited her with a tray of handsomely prepared food and insisted on her taking supper. Once again Kamal declined to accept any sustenance. Hoping for a change of heart they left the tray and lighting a paraffin oil lamp they departed, locking the door from the outside. Kamal sat lost in mysterious contemplation until three o'clock in the morning when she inexplicably initiated a search for a photograph of Baba, without success. Her only discovery was a photograph of Anna Maharaj. Delighted, she yearned to hold the photograph and converse with it. However, in consideration of what is generally viewed as her 'unclean state' and in compliance with accepted customs she felt it improper to do so. But by four o'clock the depth of her desire had developed to such a heightened degree that her control crumbled, and she picked up the beloved picture. Instantly her lethargy disappeared, and Kamal laughed merrily. Simultaneously she remembered that it was Thursday, and she had forgotten to sing her regular bhajans. Kamal instantly rectified her omission by proceeding to sing bhajans in a resounding voice. Her uncle's landlady, who was close by, was rudely awakened by this untimely display of excessive devotion. Perplexed, she awoke the rest of the family. They all listened intently, though none dared to interrupt. Finally exhausted, Kamal fell into a profoundly contented slumber around six in the morning. Between seven and eight a stranger unlocked the padlocked door with a key and, rousing Kamal, delivered a letter.

"Whose letter is it? Who wrote it?" she asked.

"I do not know," replied the stranger. "The explanation is in the letter itself."

Then he retraced his footsteps and left, relocking the door. Kamal hastily opened the mysterious letter, which read 'Be at peace in your mind. The more unhappy you are the more Anna Maharaj is distressed. Therefore, be calm.' The letter was mysteriously signed 'On Gopal's instructions'. Confounded, Kamal wondered, 'How can this be? Gopal is probably at Jarndi village now. Why and how did he become aware of my disturbed state? It cannot be possible.' Kamal meticulously folded the letter and prudently tied it into a corner of her sari paloo. Endeavouring to still her frantic mind she sat immersed in a heavy veil of thought until at last her latent curiosity was rekindled 'I'll just see once more if there is something which I may have inadvertently missed,' she decided. Her agitation increased as the letter was nowhere to be found. How and where had this letter, so securely knotted in her sari border, disappeared? The enigma remained unsolved.

Two days later Kamal returned to Shetphale and immediately went to visit Anna Maharaj. Narrating the events of the past two days, she asked “How did Gopal send a letter to me from Jarndi?”

“Gopal has no knowledge of these occurrences. I, myself was at Jarndi and have only recently returned. Had he known anything, Gopal would most certainly have confided in me. I believe that this is all the indisputable handiwork of that other Gopal, namely Baba,” replied Anna Maharaj.

Kamal, that night, quizzed Baba on this subject, “Who sent me the letter at Gomevadi?” asked Kamal.

“I did,” replied Baba.

“Why did You send the letter?” she asked.

“Had I not sent the letter, your brain would have been adversely affected. Had you been living at home, the presence of your family would have restrained and controlled your mind’s compulsions. But in another’s home, and left alone to your own devices, you became disorderly, deranged. Your condition became inconsistent and restless. Therefore, the letter was essential to instill a degree of normality, making you aware of your surroundings,” replied Baba.

The above dialogue illustrates the surpassing concern of this world’s creator and sustainer for His children. He can never become oblivious to His devotees even for a moment. At the expense of His own comfort, He protects and saves in an unobtrusive way, employing simple means. No uproar, no uncommon miracles or extraordinary feats are on display. On the contrary all is subtly contrived, as it should be. So naturally planned and executed that not a flicker of suspicion is aroused. Of what supernal love is this motherly moorthi, the protector of Her children, Sai the universal mother.

10 November 1977

On this evening at seven Kamal was engaged in the task of milking the buffalo when a fanciful thought swept across the inner screen of her mind, ‘As Arjun was granted Viswaswarup darshan so should I be. Will my guru Baba, Anna Maharaj fulfil this wish of mine?’ Subsequently Kamal’s frame became subject to tremulous shivering and shaking. With difficulty she managed to conclude the milking and setting down the milk pail, she unsteadily scattered fodder for the buffalo. Staggering inside the house she approached the verandah and sat down to regain her composure. Submerged and transported to a cosmic void Kamal was deaf and blind to her surroundings, unconscious of the questions being put to her by others. An hour sped by in this bewildered and bemused state, when suddenly she heard a forceful voice asking, “Do you want Viswaswarup darshan?”

“Yes, I do,” responded Kamal with equal force.

Instantly a divine vision of Sri Krishna with four arms, conch, discus, mace and lotus manifested and expanded in size second by second, as Kamal stared amazed until it merged with the sky. It had burgeoned to so great an extent that Kamal had to look towards the high heavens to

register the totality of it. Gradually that entrancingly lovely form transformed into a terrifying being. Every life form known and unknown, insect, animal and human was being irresistibly drawn into it's mouth. Alarmed, Kamal shouted 'Enough, enough.' But this frightful vision remained before her and reduced Kamal to quivering fright. In a trembling voice she beseeched Baba, "Stop Baba, I'm frightened."

In compassionate response to her sincere plea the daunting Virat moorthi transformed into the loveliest most endearingly charming moorthi of Sri Krishna. It soon melted to reveal Baba's form. Then it alternated four times between the forms of Baba and Sri Krishna's Narayan aspect. After becoming completely absorbed in the contemplation of Sri Krishna's enticing form, she finally regained her senses. Over two hours had disappeared into the whirlpool of time before Kamal realised that it was nine-thirty on a Thursday, and high time she ended her fast by partaking of food. But really Kamal felt no inclination for material sustenance. Her stomach was full, replete! Therefore, Kamal joined in the bhajans from ten till eleven, and afterwards she went over in her mind and savoured the precious Viswaswarupa darshan, a rare privilege accorded to her by Baba. Occasionally dozing Kamal nevertheless forced herself to be awake and sitting up at two o'clock, expectantly awaiting Baba's appearance. Baba failed to arrive until four o'clock.

"Did you have your Viswaswarup darshan," He asked.

"Yes, very well indeed, but I received darshan from Sri Krishna's form, so who are You?" she asked innocently.

"Still, you do not know Me! Why, do you consider Me separate from Sri Krishna?" He queried.

"I believe you to be Sai Baba. My guru Anna Maharaj taught me to worship and be devoted to Baba, namely Yourself. Hence, I am devoted to You, nevertheless I understand You to be 'Baba'. Sri Krishna is certainly different. My understanding is that You are both separate," responded Kamal.

"Notwithstanding this I was visible within the Krishna form. All forms are Krishna's forms. You were witness to the darshan of thousands of Gods and Goddesses within that single Krishna form, merged in the Viratrup, were you not? Do not discriminate between them. All forms and entities belong to and are only that one Krishna Bhagawan's," said Baba. "Look here," He added and, elaborating on His exposition, Baba transformed Himself into the ever-youthful Sri Krishna teasing lilting tunes from His inseparable murali. Regaining His own particular form Baba lifted Kamal with His hands, seated as she was, high into the air. Redepositing her, Baba gently held her head and with His own hands placed it upon His own feet, graciously offering padanamaskar. He then assisted her to her feet. Embracing her, Baba caressed her tenderly like a mother to the child she was. Releasing her, Baba once more donned the disguise of a bewitching moorthi of the child Gopal Krishna and merrily enticing her. He approached from a distance, becoming larger as He did so. Kamal disturbed the net of magical enchantment.

"Baba one day I committed a terrible sin. Will You forgive me?" she asked.

“What sin?” asked Baba.

“That day in Gomevadi when I was alone in the room, I clasped Anna Maharaj’s photograph to my heart. It was during the period of my monthly cycle,” she explained.

Baba responded with affectionate laughter, “Anna Maharaj is ever present in your heart so how can the question of touching him arise?” He asked in return.

Her doubts resolved and tranquillity restored, Kamal effortlessly fell asleep. Subsequently when Kamal recounted the previous day’s experiences of the Viswawarup darshan to Anna Maharaj, he advised her to ask Baba about details of her former incarnations.

On her next visit Kamal related the following information to Anna Maharaj. When Baba was asked this question He replied, “In Dwapara age when I graciously blessed Arjun with a vision of Viswaswarup you were a round ball like pebble at his feet. Solely on account of this unique opportunity of being graced with Viswaswarup darshan and the touch of Arjun’s feet you were fortunate enough to experience it again, otherwise could it be in just anyone’s destiny?”

12 November 1977

On this particular day, owing to an excessive and demanding workload coupled with her ill health, Kamal’s feet ached. Listlessly she lay down to rest, but the oblivion of sleep evaded her due to the severe spasms of pain emanating from her feet and back. Unable to contain herself she wept helplessly. Suddenly Kamal felt that her feet were being massaged. Raising herself she was aghast to discover Baba and Anna Maharaj seated on either side of her gently massaging a foot each. Instantly she shot up, prostrated at their feet and crying bitterly lamented, “Ahh, what have I done? Allowed my guru and Baba to serve me!” Convulsions racked her body as she wept inconsolably. Lovingly Baba seated her next to Himself.

“My dearest daughter why are you crying so? You are My child; I am your mother. You are My devotee; I am your God. You are My disciple; I am your guru. All these relationships and connections are identical. Seeing her beloved child crying, the mother compassionately responded. See, Anna Maharaj has also come. We were unable to withstand the sight of your being so tormented,” He said.

13 November 1977

That afternoon at approximately one thirty Kamal was obliged to walk to the family fields to assist with the work. Although the fields were a fair distance away, she was to travel alone, the others having gone on ahead. However, Kamal was unafraid, it being a regular routine and a route she was accustomed to. But on this occasion a slight apprehension disturbed her calm as an old lady hurriedly followed in her tracks.

“Come grandmother, where are you going?” Kamal asked politely.

“I am going to wherever you are going,” was the enigmatic reply.

Kamal inundated the old lady with a volley of questions but without success as she refused to engage in any further communication. On reaching their now mutual destination the old lady broke herself imposed silence, "I'll just go to the well for a drink of water," she said.

"No, you must not go inside the well," replied Kamal. "You are very old, what if your foot slips? You will fall into the water. Wait, I'll fetch the water for you," she offered.

Vouchsafing no reply the old woman hastily sped away in the direction of the well. Kamal stared in astonishment at her incredible speed and raced after her filled with concern. On reaching the well her bewilderment turned to stupefaction as she saw the old woman descend the steps with alacrity right to the centre, and then vanish into the water. Kamal's suspicions were thus confirmed for she had already guessed the old woman to be Baba in disguise. Deliberating on this strange phenomenon Kamal busied herself with the work at hand. That evening after her day's labour Kamal set off towards home. It was then that she noticed the old lady climbing up the well stairway.

"What have you been doing in the well for so long?" asked Kamal.

"I am unable to drink quickly so I was drinking the water one drop at a time," replied the woman ingeniously. Advancing swiftly, Kamal embraced the old woman, who was transformed before her eyes into a vision of Baba. Kamal fell at His feet, "Baba, how much trouble You undergo for my sake! But why disguise Yourself as an old woman? Walk with me like this," she said.

"No, this form is not for everyone," said Baba.

Donning His perfect disguise again Baba escorted Kamal home. No one harboured any suspicions or displayed the slightest misgiving towards Kamal's deceptively innocent companion. Kamal too refrained from disclosing the truth.

14th November 1977

On this day Kamal was presented with the miracle of Baba's darshan in every entity and atom. In preparation for lunch Kamal took a quantity of rice from a container and was startled to see Baba's charming form imprinted on each and every rice grain. Lost in wonder she handed the tray of rice to someone else for the removal of stones and any other foreign particles. Kamal proceeded to engage herself in the task of pulverising the chutney ingredients. Placing the chillies on the grinding stone she raised the top stone only to stop midway, dumbfounded, for each chilli now was a representation of Baba's form. Incredulous, she sat deep in thought perplexed by these unaccountable occurrences. Then, accepting each chilli as Baba, she replaced them one by one into the basket. Requesting her stepdaughter to cook the meal Kamal went to help herself to a drink of water. She was confounded by the revelation of Baba's presence within the glass and water also. Baba's omnipresence in each and every substance, matter and particle precluded any possibility of eating or drinking. How could she eat and drink? Kamal went outside to sit and contemplate on these unfathomable and astonishing manifestations. Even without material sustenance Kamal was fully replete, satisfied and content by having Baba's darshan in each and every item.

15th November 1977

Without fail every bhajan day, namely Thursday, the Lord masquerading as a white dog would present itself at Kamal's house. Surmising the dog to be divinity in disguise, Kamal's invariable practice was to offer him milk to drink and to worship him. This unusual occurrence had over the course of time become a habitual routine. However, on the day in question Kamal's memory momentarily lapsed and she neglected to fulfil this regular ritual. That night when Baba appeared Kamal carried out formal puja but notwithstanding this, she kept remembering her omission, "Oh dear, how could I forget the dog today? I never offered any worship or milk," she lamented.

Ever ready to accede to His devotees wishes the Lord, in response to Kamal's thoughts, promptly manifested Himself as the white dog. Delighted, Kamal rectified her remissness and duly offered both milk and puja. On conclusion, the assumed form disappeared as Baba dropped the donned disguise and appeared as His usual self again.

"No longer upset now? The dog has been religiously worshipped and well fed. Now stop worrying," ordered Baba. Gently soothing tones emerged from the flute as Baba expertly played upon it before departing.

16th November 1977

A Deepavali bullock cart race was the prevailing custom in Kamal's village. A jovial atmosphere began to build up fifteen to twenty days prior to the race as competitors prepared themselves for the eagerly awaited contest. This year members of Kamal's family decided to enter as contestants as they possessed two excellent bullocks. Kamal's husband requested her to ask Baba whether they would successfully defeat the opposition or not. Kamal indignantly replied, "I refuse to ask Baba trivial worldly questions. However, my intuition suggests that your cart will achieve first honours. The responsibility to uphold the truth of my words belongs to Baba and He will prove them true."

In fact, it turned out to be quite the opposite. Contrary to Kamal's prophetic announcement, first place was won by another contestant. Enraged, the family members lashed out at Kamal and openly displayed an antagonistic disbelief towards Baba. Reproaching Kamal for their lost dignity, they hurled insults, insinuating that Baba's daily presence was a figment of her imagination, effectively labelling Kamal a liar. Baba, they asserted, had never showed an impossibility made possible that could be openly verified. All the recent miraculous occurrences were fabrications they insisted. Kamal was naturally cast down and dejected. In mortification she mentally reproached Baba. 'You do not care for me in the slightest. It is Your duty to fulfil their wishes. If You have no inclination to do this for me then I too have no wish to be devoted to You,' she said. It appeared as if Kamal's pride in her devotion had swollen out of all proportion. Baba, the guardian of His devotees, was definitely displeased by this arrogant presumption. This is the Baba who is the saviour of His devotees when they are confronted by the insidious enemy of egoism. That night, contrary to Baba's usual practice, He did not appear at two in the morning with His flute, but manifested in the guise of Sri Ram bearing is bow and arrows instead. Kamal, still smouldering, snapped accusingly at him, (between true devotees and God, this is not an

extraordinary occurrence) “Why, have you brought your bow and arrows today to destroy my objectionable thoughts?”

“Which form of God do you prefer most? Which of God’s devotions do you enjoy performing?” asked Sri Ram in reply.

“I like the God of Gods, the supreme God and I worship him,” she replied.

“What do you want?” came the next question. On voicing these words Sri Ram disappeared and in his place Shiva materialised. He reiterated the above questions of Sri Ram also disappearing as Dattatreya guru manifested.

“To whom are you devoted,” he asked.

“I am devoted to you,” replied Kamal without hesitation.

Laughing Dattatreya guru Bhagawan replied, “No! You have only answered thus because my name includes the word ‘guru’.”

“Yes, that is true,” agreed Kamal.

Bhagawan Datta guru then effortlessly lifted her onto the palm of his hand, raising it and Kamal aloft above his head. Astonished by this enigmatic behaviour Kamal glanced all around from her aerial perch until eventually her gaze returned down towards her mentor, Dattatreya guru. To her horror he had now mysteriously transformed into her own beloved guru Anna Maharaj. Without a second’s hesitation or consideration for her own safety she leapt from his hand and, dizzily losing control of her faculties, she fell heavily and lay semiconscious. Dattatreya Maharaj (who had reappeared in place of Anna Maharaj) assisted her gently to a sitting position and tenderly smoothed his hand over her head and back. Calmly he stood before Kamal, gradually transforming into the charming Sri Krishna form.

“You should realise that by worshipping your guru you are graciously being offered the supreme attainment of worshipping all the Gods,” he said. Propounding this profound but simple truth Sri Krishna vanished and in his place Baba appeared.

Assuming a haughty stance, Baba regarded her with an expression of extreme displeasure, “I have come to inform you that our friendship is today at an end. This is My final appearance before you. I will never come to see you again. I failed to fulfil your wishes, and therefore failed to retain your respect, and so, why should you be devoted to Me?” He said repeating Kamal’s own accusations. Baba furiously flung the flute to the ground. Her own resentment vanished in the wake of Baba’s dramatic announcement. Kamal immediately advanced forward and fell at His feet, clasping them entreatingly.

“Please forgive me Baba. I understand You perfectly now. I’ll never let You leave,” she pleaded.

Baba, determined to ensure that the lesson of the pitfalls of ego and arrogance was fully realised by her, attempted to forcibly retrieve His feet. Shedding profuse tears of contrition Kamal

beseeched, “Baba I have imprisoned You within my heart so how can I release You and let You go?” she cried in desperation.

Baba instantly regained His benevolent attitude, His assumed rage dispersing like a wisp of smoke. “Where do you think I’m going to?” He asked in mock surprise. “It is not possible for Me to leave you either. Abandoning His devotees where can God go to? You are annoyed because I did not fulfil your wish or uphold your word and honour, is it not? But I did all this solely for your benefit. Had your prophetic words been seen to have the label of truth people would have bombarded you with a constant stream of questions. You would have discovered it to be very troublesome. In addition, your personal spiritual progress would have been hindered. Furthermore, such a task is not your private concern, nor is it conducive to your advancement,” He concluded.

“But it is Your name which would have been promoted and gained fame through this simple act,” she advanced by way of argument. “Instead, now gossip is rife. You are resident within all beings therefore why are You permitting Your name to be so diminished rather than rightfully honoured,” she asked.

“My glory lies in the glory of My devotees. That I should have a separate illustrious majesty of My own is not what I seek. I do not relish it, nor am I inclined towards it. The majesty of My devotees increases with devotion, not with pride,” replied Baba.

Baba then gave Kamal a plain white sheet of paper. As Kamal gazed at it her astonishment grew, for lines magically appeared in yellow, red, blue, green and various other colours. Then equally mysteriously an Om sign manifested upon the lower curve of which was seen a rosary.

“Baba there is nothing written on the paper,” queried Kamal.

“Look above, there is written ‘Om tat sat sri narayana tu, purushotam guru tu.’ The mala which is hanging from the omkar’s omkar, it’s beads are representative of the cycles of birth and death. The individual soul commencing its journey from the mani (representing the oversoul) traverses the course of birth death cycles inevitably returning to the mani. As soon as this mala comes into the hand for purposes of japa, one attains liberation from the birth and death cycle,” elaborated Baba.

Baba then proceeded to reinstruct Kamal in her mantra (which He had previously written for her on the 14th of August 1977) enjoining her to religiously chant it regularly before going to sleep. Having tutored her in this valuable principal Baba vanished without further ado.

19th November 1977

Anna Maharaj had recommended that Kamal seek the knowledge of her previous births from Baba. So today, honouring her guru’s advice, Kamal requested Baba’s indulgence on this subject.

“Were I to inform you of all your previous incarnations you would fail to comprehend or remember them, therefore I’ll only recount incidents pertaining to four or five births,” He offered.

“I’ll try to memorise them all so please tell me everything,” Kamal obstinately insisted.

Baba adamantly refused and adhered to His proposed intention. Even so, from His account of these four to five births Kamal’s recollection is fragmented and she forgot certain details. However, she communicated all she could remember to Anna Maharaj. The following narration is in her own words;

“On a previous occasion Baba had already informed me that during Krishna’s revelation of the Viswaswarup to Arjun I was a small round stone against which Arjun propped his bow. At the conclusion of the war Sri Krishna playfully picked up the stone and taking it with him, eventually deposited it against a coral tree growing in Sathyabhama’s home. As the tree was daily watered the stone received moisture also. Gradually it grew in size until one day it cracked internally. A large snake emerged from within the broken stone. This was my next birth. Subsequently Sri Krishna contacted the snake with his foot, and it ceased all movement. From here on I cannot recollect the precise order of Baba’s narrative. After this I saw myself as a snake entwined around Shivaji’s neck. At a later stage he gifted me to Ravana in the form of a mystical shakti. From this point it became virtually impossible to distinguish which birth ended where and which one began where. To untangle this skein is testing me sorely. I have tried to unravel them, but the threads of the births are confusingly enmeshed with one another,” she ended.

Baba had continued the narrative, but Kamal failed to retain the facts in her memory. Baba had covered events pertaining to four or five incarnations prior to Kamal’s present birth. But Kamal’s recollection is only partial. At the time of Shirdi Sai Baba’s avatar, Kamal took birth in the form of a cow resident within Baba’s close vicinity. Thereafter she was born as a bird akin somewhat to a peacock. It became her invariable practice to sit in solitude upon the Prasanthi Nilayam domes and parapets at Puttaparthi. As the bird’s lifespan was short it soon died and Kamal’s soul reincarnated in her present form.

“Baba, why have You given me so many births? Why didn’t You liberate me prior to this birth?” queried Kamal.

“Because all these births were essential,” stated Baba. “It is difficult for you to comprehend but it is entirely due to these previous births that you are now endowed with a human incarnation and are graciously blessed with the gratification of My intimate company. I predetermined the future course of your life by deliberately arranging your marriage here in Shetphale. I called you here, otherwise your parents had already arranged your marriage elsewhere. Inevitably that agreement was terminated. Using Anna Maharaj as the instrument you were initiated into mantra and devotion, and introduced to Me. For this purpose, Anna Maharaj was indispensable. No other person would have sufficed, for you would not have trusted in or developed faith in the words of anyone else. Your marriage, parents, village, caste and so on were all planned, prepared and contrived in accordance with My wishes,” explained Baba.

Baba then went through the names of Kamal's father and mother, their respective villages, the time of their births and their marriage. He meticulously detailed all this data and added Kamal's husband's name and his vocation and other particulars. "Now," said Baba. "I'll predict your future births and also foretell the future events of your present birth."

"No, Baba. Enough," intervened Kamal. "I have no wish to hear anymore. Whatever happens in the future will be seen at that time."

As Kamal concluded her story Anna Maharaj corrected her, "Since Baba was prepared to relate everything to you, you should have listened. Never mind, ask again some other time."

"It does not seem right to revive the topic especially as I have already refused once, so we'll let it rest," Kamal stated.

22nd November 1977

Monday, Karthika Ekadashi. Following the bhajan programme at Anna Maharaj's ashram Kamal wended her way home around eight thirty or nine in the evening. It being Ekadashi the majority of the family members were observing a fast, as was Kamal, therefore there was no necessity to cook. They prepared a special meal specifically for such occasions, which they ate. Kamal, however, refrained from even that, helping herself to some peanuts instead. Whilst eating she discovered a small object amongst the peanuts. Assuming it to be a stone she separated it and placed it on one side. As she popped a few more peanuts into her mouth another similar object was caught between her teeth. The realisation dawned that far from being grit or stone they were in fact tiny balls of vibhuti. Impulsively Kamal initiated a search for more of these fragrant vibhuti balls, until eventually she had collected thirteen balls including the first one. Kamal carefully wrapped them in paper and put them for safe keeping into her vibhuti container. That night Baba arrived inordinately early at eleven o'clock. She immediately enquired about the vibhuti balls.

"I see, having eaten so much today your stomach is full, so you desisted from eating the vibhuti balls, and kept them in paper instead," Baba jokingly teased her.

In truth, having unexpectedly found the vibhuti balls, Kamal had not eaten anymore peanuts. Her childlike delight at acquiring these balls of vibhuti had satisfied her desire for food, leaving her replete and content. Also, because the vibhuti balls had manifested and were not presented by Baba Himself, Kamal was undecided as to what should be done with them. On hearing Baba's bantering tone Kamal retrieved the packet but intent upon mischief, she enclosed it in one hand whilst concealing both hands behind her back.

"What is in this fist? Open it," said Baba as He pointed at her.

"Nothing," declared Kamal as she swiftly transferred the packet into her other hand and revealed the now empty fist. This endearingly childish pleasant playfulness continued for a while until finally placing the packet between her folded hands she stood before Baba in an attitude of prayer. "I left the packet in some box," she offered.

“They are in this box,” replied Baba capturing both her hands in His. “You are to eat these balls now, immediately. In future when I give you these balls, I’ll be visible to you in person. Now give Me the packet,” He ordered.

Opening the packet Baba personally popped each one into Kamal’s mouth. In all there were seventeen. Kamal was perplexed as originally she had counted only thirteen.

“You ate one ball. Here are seventeen and previously I gave you seven. Tell Me, how many is that?” queried Baba.

“Baba what is the purpose in my keeping an account? So long as You offer them, I’ll eat them but on condition that You give them to me in person. Only then will I accept them and even do my japa,” retorted Kamal.

“I’ll give you the balls during bhajans,” promised Baba. “Now I’ll go as I have urgent business to attend to,” He said.

“If You leave now You will have to come back again at two o’clock, so don’t go,” pleaded Kamal. “I know you may have much to do, if so please go. But my wish is that You are visible here with me till two o’clock,” said Kamal.

“Fine,” agreed Baba. Baba left but inexplicably His form was still visible seated before Kamal. Lying down, she gazed at Him lovingly, while intermittently dozing. In conformance with His usual practice at two o’clock Baba played a few notes on His flute and then even the vision disappeared.

7th December 1977

In honour of Jnaneshwar Maharaj’s sacred anniversary a ceremonial recitation of a holy text was in progress from 2nd December at Anna Maharaj’s ashram. Each morning the public programme commenced at seven thirty followed by bhajans and a discourse by Anna Maharaj. The whole affair concluded at approximately twelve o’clock when Anna Maharaj would retire to his quarters. Kamal was fortunate enough to attend all these functions.

On the morning of the 7th, which was the monthly Ekadashi day, Kamal’s tardiness in rising meant her having to postpone her daily discipline of paduka puja and watering of the holy tulsi plant. Promising to fulfil her duties, on her return Kamal attended the religious reading. Notwithstanding her firm resolve, the matter was effaced from her memory by devotional fervour and contentment. After arriving at twelve o’clock Kamal sat down to lunch with her family to break her fast, when she suddenly recollected her neglected obligations. Abandoning her meal Kamal rushed to perform her daily disciplined devotions, ritually worshipping the holy tulsi plant, her sadguru’s photograph and finally the padukas. Kamal’s house was no different from its neighbours in offering little privacy. She had for that reason placed a number of God’s moorthis on a wooden shelf, erected high upon the wall to discourage children and other curious persons from handling them.

Today as she washed the padukas, it entered her thoughts to pour some water over the shelf to clean it. But the instant she sprinkled drops of water on the shelf than they trickled through the

gaps. Kamal urgently held out her cupped hands and virtuously caught the water as a tirth (holy water). To her astonishment a tulsi bead and a vibhuti ball suddenly fell into her hands. Fascinated, Kamal decided to investigate this uncommon occurrence. She poured slightly more water on the shelf and, incredibly, she was rewarded with another tulsi bead and vibhuti ball. By now thoroughly enjoying this amusing diversion, she gleefully splashed quantities of water on the shelf until at length she had amassed thirteen beads and twelve vibhuti balls. Having counted her treasure trove she once more scattered the water in the hope of the miraculous transformations only to be disappointed, for this time it proved unfruitful. Only then did Kamal cease playing. Kamal gingerly arranged the beads in groups of three around the padukas and, closing her eyes in an attitude of surrender, she made obeisance. However, when she opened her eyes, she stood awestruck by the prodigious marvel in front of her, for the beads had multiplied to twenty-four. This game proved to be equally exciting as the beads multiplied on each occasion she closed her eyes. Ultimately, they totalled 108 beads plus a mani bead and 108 vibhuti balls. After meticulously wrapping them in separate pieces of paper Kamal secured them in the lock-up chest. This had been such a profoundly emotional and spiritual experience with divinity that, Kamal craved to conduct puja according to precisely accurate shastric injunctions. She collected all the necessary requisites and satisfied her desire. After a light fruit luncheon, she returned at four o'clock to Anna Maharaj's ashram to listen avidly to her guru's discourse. Seated silently among the gathering her attention was attracted by a marigold flower garland gracing Jnaneshwar Maharaj's photograph. She was deeply entranced. Those beautiful yellow flowers enticed and fascinated her. She contemplated them longingly only to be suddenly surprised when five identical flowers miraculously appeared in her hands. Kamal was astounded, and wondered how this had happened. She did not need to deliberate for long in order to decide who was responsible.

At home she lovingly arranged a flower each on Anna Maharaj and Baba's photographs and a solitary flower on the padukas. Having seen to this paramount task Kamal busied herself in her daily household duties. Contrary to His usual practice Baba put in an appearance at the slightly earlier time of one o'clock. Immediately upon arrival Baba asked Kamal, "Where is the prasad I gave you? Show it to Me."

"You vowed to present it to me personally. Now, how am I to know whether it was You who gave it to me or not?" said Kamal.

"I promised to present them in 'any form I choose'. Now, do give them to Me," said Baba.

But when Baba commanded Kamal to eat the balls of vibhuti her wilful nature asserted itself. "Baba You also eat them with me," she said. "We will share them between us."

"No, I will not eat them! I gave them to you, for you. Are you trying to make Me eat My own gift to you?" asked Baba.

"You presented them to me. Now they are no longer Yours," she reasoned logically. "Therefore, there should be no objection to eating them."

Baba, whose persistence in examining His devotee sincerity is well known adamantly refused to be persuaded, so Kamal resorted to her last ploy, blackmail. "In that case I will not eat

them either,” she retorted. Baba graciously gave way. “I’ll feed them to You as You did to me,” added Kamal.

Nimbly suiting the action to the word, she popped them one by one into His mouth. Kamal’s insistence was amply rewarded for each time Baba opened His mouth to receive the proffered vibhuti ball a divine vision of God manifested within the luminous light emanating from there. Delighted by this rapturously divine leela with the Lord, Kamal now ate her share of the vibhuti balls. Baba however, in His inscrutable manner, regurgitated the balls He had consumed within seconds. With remarkable agility, Kamal gathered up the precious prasada into her hands. Her pleasure turned to amazement for the glistening globes were now minute little Shivlings.

“Look, these Shivlings are awaiting puja,” said Baba. “We will worship them.”

Overwhelmed, and flooded with sweet celestial bliss, Kamal gathered all the articles for puja. Briskly but carefully, she set the tiny Shivlings in neat orderly rows. As she concluded her task a Ganesh moorthi miraculously revealed itself in place of the Shivlings. Captivated, Kamal picked up the moorthi, and asked Baba about its appearance and purpose.

“Ah yes,” said Baba. “It is Prasanthi Nilayam’s Ganesh. You are now to worship this.”

The puja was completed satisfactorily. Baba then enquired after the tulsi beads, and requested some thread. Unable to locate the thread anywhere else, Kamal took the thread that was binding other packages and offered it and the tulsi beads to Baba. On contact with Baba’s all-powerful hands, the beads and thread instantly formed themselves into a mala. Baba and Kamal formally worshipped the mala after which He hung it on Ganesh’s trunk. Ganesh promptly brought the mala into contact with Baba’s head, then gracefully placed it around Kamal’s neck.

“Baba, You gave me the vibhuti balls so that I do not have to do japa, is it not? So, why are You offering me this mala,” queried a confused Kamal.

“This mala is given to you for japa which you must perform. It is to avoid the consequences that arise if you do not chant the japa due to unavoidable circumstances that I am giving you the vibhuti balls,” countered Baba.

To her amazement Baba reconsumed the fifty-four Shivlings He had disgorged for puja purposes, and equally swiftly released fifty-four vibhuti balls into Kamal’s hands. These balls, unlike the previous white ones, were of a peculiar but familiar yellow colour. On being queried by Kamal, Baba explained that they were of the very same colour as the yellow flowers that He had earlier given her, and which had so fascinated her. Remembering them, Kamal ran to inspect them only to find that they had gone, leaving behind only a solitary petal on the padukas as a token of their existence. Still curious, she verified Baba’s explanation by matching the petal to the vibhuti balls. They were identical in colour. An inexplicably sweet emotion of love bubbled inside her as she happily removed the tulsi mala from around her neck and set it tenderly around Baba’s neck instead. Immediately on contacting Baba a large golden locket with Om inscribed upon it materialised at the centre of the mala.

“What is this?” asked Kamal. “How did the locket come here?”

“It’s for you,” replied Baba.

“No! I do not want it,” said Kamal horrified. “Had it been made of wood, iron or tin I would have accepted it but I do not need a large locket of gold.”

Baba dematerialised the locket and replaced the mala around Kamal’s neck. Soon it was time for Baba to leave, Kamal cheekily asked, “Have you forgotten anything today?”

“No, why?” queried the Lord.

“Then it appears that my ears have become deaf,” Kamal teased.

Instantly remembrance dawned! It appeared He had forgotten to play the flute. A momentary twinkle and He resembled an endearingly beautiful Sri Krishna of twelve years of age. His upper body was unchanged while the lower half was exquisitely draped in a pitamber, His feet were crossed charmingly in the traditional pose while the flute was nonchalantly tucked in at His waist. As He was about to play Baba stopped.

“My daughter, today you play,” He said handing the flute to Kamal.

“I cannot,” she protested. “And You have never taught me.”

Baba refused to take ‘No’ for an answer, and compelled Kamal to try. Naturally she failed to produce the sweet lilting tones which habitually emerged from the flute. He hastily gestured to indicate the time and said, “Look how late I am today!”

“Please remain a little longer,” pleaded Kamal.

Baba generously agreed and used the extra time to teach Kamal the bhajan ‘Chit chora yashoda ke bal’. Baba taught her the words, music and tone, and then Kamal followed by singing. A pleasant half hour was whiled away. Finally terminating the bhajan session, Baba hurriedly handed Kamal a letter a moment before he disappeared. Opening the letter, she was furious to note the guru mantra written within. “It would be better if Baba instantly this second returned,” she fumed. Lo and behold, Baba did return.

“What is this You have done?” she complained. “A guru mantra is not given twice. My understanding is that the day I accepted the mantra from Anna Maharaj, that day You also gave it to me. I observe no distinctions between You two therefore why have You started this?”

“I wanted to test you, and you have passed,” declared a gratified Baba. Blessing her with the encouraging benediction of ‘bravo’ Baba duly departed.

It has previously been mentioned that the Lord, donning the disguise of a white dog, would frequently present himself every Thursday at Kamal’s house and she would ritually offer worship and milk to the Lord in that form. On numerous occasions he would enter the house in that assumed guise, only revealing his divine reality afterwards. Even this explicit revelation failed to bring home to her the truth of his omniscient omnipresence. God masquerades in many forms for

in actuality all forms are representations of the divine, as He alone is the inner atmic resident in all. However, spiritually, mentally and practically the majority of people are so enmeshed in maya and so deluded by doubts that they are unable to recognise or realise the oneness of divinity.

Reverting to our story, this incident occurred on the same night as the events narrated earlier. Kamal accompanied by her family arrived home late that night at eleven o'clock having attended bhajans and a discourse. They readily took to their beds and were soon loudly snoring, all except for Kamal. She was racked with anxiety for, lost in the dark maze of ignorance of name and form, she yearned to feed the dog. The Lord manifested as a white dog at twelve o'clock. She was at once joyous and downcast, as there was no milk in the house. She was undecided as to what should be done, until enlightenment dawned on her. She rose and took outside with her a jar container. She had to find her path towards the buffalo in pitch blackness. Nothing was visible. Everything was shrouded in the deepest darkness. But God's grace is ever available and bountiful for at each step an incandescent glow appeared to guide her. She gazed in wonder at this unique phenomenon. The milk so acquired was lovingly offered and accepted and Kamal fell asleep content. Later at approximately one in the morning Baba arrived, leading to the events and conversations related earlier. The following day the persons who slept on the verandah asked Kamal, "Who was teaching you bhajans late last night?"

"No-one" replied Kamal. "You probably heard sounds from else where at night."

Kamal satisfied their curiosity and calmed them down in this way, but internally she was bursting with blissful ecstasy as the implication of their questions was that they had heard Baba's voice. This was a matter of moment and great good fortune. If not pratyaksh darshan at least Baba's grace had allowed them to hear His mellifluous voice. Kamal's unbounded happiness exceeded all earthly limits and showed itself visibly in her countenance and lighthearted stance.

22 February 1978

All those residents of Shetpale who held Anna Maharaj in high esteem, revered him and frequented the ashram instinctively came to regard Kamal's house as much theirs as their guru's abode. They were all inclined to while away the hours in Kamal's company revelling in Baba's majestic glory, leelas and miracles. Kamal of course naturally felt every bit as enthusiastic about these sorts of gatherings. With this laudable objective, Shakutai Datye and Prabhavati Hingmere escorted Kamal home at ten in the evening on the termination of the bhajans at the ashram. All three were elated over the prospect of having the opportunity to elaborate upon and discuss Baba's glorious mahimas to their hearts content. Unknown to Kamal, the other two women also entertained a secret ulterior motive. They hoped that perhaps when Baba visited Kamal that night they may be fortuitously blessed to hear the sweet strains of His melodious music. And should it be Baba's will, darshan might be granted. The three companions engaged themselves in reminiscing adoringly on Baba's magnificence until the early hours. Kamal, lounging at leisure, chatted away. Suddenly at five minutes to two she sat up. As usual she perceived Baba seated before her. Kamal increased the animation and rapidity of her speech as Baba commenced playing the flute. Certain that her two friends were also spectators to the vision in front of her,

Kamal's personal enjoyment, enthusiasm and joy multiplied a thousand-fold. At this juncture she heard Shakutai saying, "I feel that perhaps Baba has arrived, but He is not visible." Kamal was stupefied by this declaration.

"Baba, this is not fair. Why don't You give darshan to them also?" she entreated. "They came so ardently and with such high hopes, and spent the night awake, expectantly awaiting Your arrival. And You! You are tormenting them thus!"

Saying this she quickly captured Baba's hand and placed it between the hands of Shakutai and Prabhavati. To their utter grief they were conscious of nothing. Only vacant air touched their hands. They both wept, heartbroken at their misfortune. Kamal beseeched Baba on their behalf.

"Look, I did not grant darshans like these instantly even to you," explained Baba. "For seven to eight months I assumed many varied disguises, in the form of a dog, a beggar, an old man, and even a bumble bee to give you darshan. When the appropriate time arrived only then did I offer shakshatkar darshan. When the correct time comes, they too will be granted similar darshans."

Afterwards Kamal conveyed Baba's promise to Shakutai and Prabhavati who wholeheartedly accepted it and left for home quite content.

27th February 1978

At around eight o'clock in the evening Kamal entered her kitchen to be confronted by the daunting spectacle of the stove fire burning with unusual ferocity, with flames leaping two feet high into the air. Kamal stared at this awe-inspiring phenomenon in astonishment. The blaze gradually receded until it vanished and gave place to a brick, upon which materialised the apparition of Pandurang Bhagawan's moorthi with tongues of flames issuing from its mouth. Before long it too vanished and an enchanting idol of Sri Ram manifested with the familiar fiery display. This was swiftly followed by an idol of Shivaji, then Anna Maharaj, and then Baba heroically seated with wildfire blazing and flashing from His mouth, encircling Him and flickering high overhead. Anxious for Baba's safety, Kamal impulsively rushed towards Him, before stopping short as she became conscious of the conflagration which now surrounded her as well. She regarded the vision in perplexity, unable to comprehend its nature, for she felt neither heat nor any burning. She was not harmed in any way. She stood stunned at Baba's side until the conflagration gently subsided and the vision vanished.

27th March 1978

That night at eight o'clock Kamal was busily engaged in making chappatis in preparation for the evening meal when, unheralded, a strange lady who Kamal reckoned to be fifty years of age appeared from nowhere. Unusually for her age she was beautiful, fair and well attired as if belonging to a wealthy brahmin household.

"Who are you," asked Kamal. "I do not recognise you. Where have you come from?"

"What! Don't you recognise me?" retorted the lady. "All people know me and hail me as Mother."

“Perhaps everyone calls you mother even so you must have some name! Tell me that name,” said Kamal.

“Well, my name is Radhakrishna,” replied the lady.

“Where have you come from? Whose house are you going to?” queried Kamal her curiosity aroused by this developing mystery.

“My village is very far away. You do not know of that place,” replied the lady. “It is to your house I have come and you whom I have come to meet.”

Kamal was thoroughly mystified by this. She had never seen this woman before, who had appeared without any luggage or so much as a handbag. She insisted, ‘I have come from far away.’ Relegating this conundrum to the back of her mind Kamal decided that since the strange woman had specifically come to meet her, appropriate hospitality should be extended. Kamal approached her, “Please be seated on this stool. I’ll make tea for you,” said Kamal.

The lady courteously complied as Kamal quickly prepared tea, using all the available milk to ensure a deliciously tasty cup of tea. Kamal poured out the tea and politely offered it to her. But the exceptionally charming lady sat in silence. Alarmed, Kamal tried to move her hand, but it stiffly refused to budge. “What’s happened? Why doesn’t your hand move?” asked a worried Kamal.

“I am suffering from paralysis and so my hand is immobile,” stated the stranger. “Therefore, offer me the tea with your own hands!”

Kamal poured some tea into a plate and proceeded to hand feed her.

“Enough!” intervened the lady after only a few sips. “I’m full. You drink the rest.”

Then, unbelievably, before an amazed Kamal, she raised the dish to Kamal’s lips with both her hands. “Only just now you said your hands cannot move, do not function,” Kamal said after taking a few sips.

“What can I say,” the lady replied wearily. “The disorder is such that occasionally my hand becomes numb and ponderous for five to ten minutes.”

To Kamal’s startled admiration there appeared on her sari sparkling jewels glittering. The lady herself was then transformed, becoming at once more lovely and youthful. When she rose, her posture and stance duplicated Baba’s. There is in existence a photograph of Baba known as ‘the saintly woman’ where Baba is depicted beneath a coconut tree tenderly holding a branch. The lady replicated Baba’s photograph perfectly. Entranced, Kamal was reminded of Brindavan’s Radha Krishna.

“When did you change your sari and put on these jewels?” asked Kamal. “I instinctively feel you must be some Goddess. Until now, I wrongly took you to be an ordinary lady. I should have recognised you. I have erred. Please forgive my blunder. Now I believe that you are none other than my Baba and I will not let you go. See, I’ve captured your hand! Kindly reveal your true form to me,” pleaded Kamal.

But the deity disappeared. It was beyond Kamal to work out how she had escaped since she had clasped her hand so tightly. Kamal vowed to abstain from food and drink until Baba gave her darshan and began to wait forlornly. Five to ten minutes passed before Baba appeared in His usual inimitable manner.

“Baba, that lady who came and left a few moments ago was actually You, was it not?” accused Kamal.

“No! I do not know who it was! I have only now appeared before you,” replied Baba.

Undeterred Kamal repeatedly queried Baba until He admitted His hand in the affair. Satisfied Kamal said, “Baba, I made some tea for that lady but she didn’t drink it and Your timing is perfect today. You can drink the tea instead.”

“Accha! You are proposing to offer Me leftover tea?” Baba teased.

“Baba, how cruel You are. I am not offering You such tea. You watch. I’ll prepare fresh tea for You. Each night You visit so late that it’s not the time for tea. Today I insist on Your taking tea here,” Kamal protested.

Baba accepted. Putting water on to heat she added sugar, and tea leaves as it boiled. Setting the pan aside too steep, it flashed across her mind that there was no milk available, since it had all been used for the first cup of tea. Kamal sat down mortified with head and shoulders drooping.

“The tea is ready. Why don’t you add the milk?” Baba asked her, thoroughly enjoying her dilemma. Agitated, Kamal recounted the whole tale into Baba’s amused ears.

“Look and search earnestly. There must be some milk somewhere. You may have kept milk elsewhere for the children,” Baba suggested.

“No Baba. I remember exactly. I used all the milk for that lady’s tea and there is none elsewhere”.

“Perhaps you have changed your milkman and forgotten. Probably there is milk in an aluminium pan in the niche in the room outside. Go and see.”

Kamal adamantly refused to accept this proposal, but on Baba’s repeated encouragement for her to investigate, she eventually agreed to go. ‘There was no harm in looking,’ she thought. On inspecting the room outside Kamal was completely stunned. Before her she saw two pints of fresh, thick milk in an aluminium pan. Her mind ceased to function as she floated in the cosmic void. Consciousness slowly re-awakened and aware again of her surroundings and the task at hand, she prayed that Baba had not left in the intervening time. Lifting the pan she hurried to the kitchen, added the milk and promptly presented Baba with a cup of tea. Drinking a little of it Baba returned the remaining tea to Kamal to drink.

“Baba, soon supper will be ready. Please eat here today,” asked Kamal.

“No, I must go. I only came for a short while,” Baba protested.

On Kamal's appealing solicitations Baba responded with, "You are not mad, are you? If I were to sit down to eat and someone comes, what will happen? You know, do you not? Why are you being awkwardly obstinate?" asked Baba.

"No-one will come. I'll stand by the door to prevent anyone from entering," she promised. "Today You will have to eat here with me."

"Accha, in that case close the door," He replied affably.

When she closed the door the kitchen electrics suffered a puzzling power failure, leaving them in total darkness. Visibility nonexistent, poor Kamal, virtually in tears, entreated Baba, "Baba please do not go anywhere, I beg of You," requested Kamal through a mist of tears. "The light will return soon, then I'll serve You supper immediately." As if in honour of her words the power supply commenced functioning, though at a reduced voltage. Luminosity was dim like candlelight. In fact the room was barely visible.

"Accha, tell Me, what will you give Me to eat?" asked Baba.

"This, what's ready dal, chappati, rice and curry," Kamal countered.

"Prepare some halwa for Me," said Baba.

"Baba, there is no semolina in the house. How can I make it? What shall I do?" she asked.

"You never remember anything do you? Go and look in that trunk over there. You have left some semolina in a plastic bag," Baba remonstrated.

"Baba I have never stored edible items in that trunk," replied an exasperated Kamal.

"Even so, because I am asking you, go and check," He insisted.

Kamal walked to the trunk and opening it she said, "Baba, there is a plastic bag in here!"

"Yes, yes, I know. The semolina is inside it," He replied.

"Baba, it's empty. I opened it and even checked by putting my hand inside it. There is nothing in it," countered Kamal.

"Bring it over here and look again. It's inside," answered Baba.

Kamal gladly brought the bag, turning it upside down, ruffling and shaking it, she laughed delightedly 'How Baba had lost'. For the bag was empty. But then she straightened the bag!

"Now look, perhaps the semolina has arrived in it," retorted Baba provocatively.

What an extraordinary occurrence! For when Kamal put her hand into the bag it was met by approximately one and a half pounds of semolina. She gasped in excitement. Galvanised into action she requisitioned the other necessary ingredients and speedily cooked the halwa for Baba, who ate it with obvious relish. Baba then assumed the mien of one parched by thirst and asked for

water. Kamal duly provided a glass of water. After drinking it, Baba declared His thirst yet unquenched and asked for more. In this manner Baba consumed a full half pitcher.

It is vitally important to mention an aspect of life prevalent in Kamal's village. During the summer months there is a desperate scarcity of water. Even the wells and rivers dry up. The sandy riverbed is aridly inhospitable, and it becomes incumbent upon the villagers to dig a deep trench-like ditch wherein the water, slowly oozing up from below, collects. Therefore, each day it becomes the essential daily chore of every village woman to arduously dig their own personal ditch, for the previous day's trench will fail to produce any water on the morrow. From this meagre supply they replenish their pitchers, collecting water for all their household needs. This strenuous task alone consumes three hours of their valuable time every morning.

"Baba I fully realise Your identity. You alone can drink the whole world's water in one breath, so there is no need to test me. I know You are capable of accomplishing anything. However if You are truly thirsty, I'll give you water," stated Kamal knowledgeably.

"Enough now. Actually, I had intended to test you," admitted the Lord frankly.

Kamal reflected on the appropriateness of Baba's arrival today. She had been presented with the intoxicating opportunity of serving Him halwa and tea in her house. What could be more fortunate? Now, if only she could offer puja, how thrilling it would be. She confided her ambition to Baba, who amiably assented. So she buoyantly collected all the articles for the worship. Anticipating the felicity in store she hastened to where Baba was seated. He had decamped and on that spot stood a Krishna moorthi. Recognising it as another of Baba's mischievous pranks Kamal unconcernedly performed her puja. She sang Baba's aarthi, following it from a book. Baba materialised again.

"Which aarthi are you singing? Is it correct?" interrupted Baba. "Which day is it today?" answering His own question, "It is Wednesday so you should sing Pandurang's aarthi today!"

"Your aarthi and Pandurang's aarthi is one and the same," she retorted.

"But you know Pandurang's aarthi off by heart therefore why did you not sing it? It is unnecessary to resort to a book to sing My aarthi. Your mind has not yet dispensed with this attitude of distinctions," concluded Baba.

Thereafter Baba magically produced a besan laddu, "This is for your children," He said, offering it to Kamal. "Give it to them."

"Baba, the children will not eat it quietly here. While eating they will wander off amongst other people. Then people will gossip. There will be a host of questions, comments and argumentative strife created. So please do not give laddhus for the children," replied Kamal.

"Accha, then you eat it," said Baba.

Kamal happily ate the divine delicacy. Similarly, Baba offered Kamal a cup of the milk He had created to drink, consuming the remainder Himself. Systematically disposing of all the evidence, He dematerialised the leftover semolina and handed Kamal the empty bag. However, before

leaving Baba gave Kamal two large sugar lumps for her children. Accepting this as Baba's mahaprasad she kept it for the children.

CHAPTER 3

7 August 1978

It was a Thursday and as usual a crowd of thirty to forty people had assembled for bhajans. Anna Maharaj also graced the occasion with his presence. Unfortunately, on this day Kamal was unwell as she was plagued with a cantankerous cough. Longing to offer her devotion in song she attempted a bhajan which she only managed to finish with wretched tribulation, bothered as she was by her troublesome cough. She was annoyed and dissatisfied as no one derived any joy from the recital. After bhajans everyone departed, but her family upbraided her with, “What call was there for you to sing with such a hoarse throat?” they asked. “No one enjoyed it in the least.”

Miserable, Kamal did not eat. She sat down with a melancholy expression and was disinclined to sleep. Baba appeared at His usual hour. Consoling, He assisted her up, seating her on His lap.

Kamal’s irascibility remained. “My voice is not good, and no one was pleased with my bhajan. How can You be gratified? Why don’t You improve my voice?” she complained.

“I like your voice, and you are singing for Me, is it not? What have you to gain from other people?” asked Baba.

“How can a hoarse horrible voice be appealing? It can never be liked,” said Kamal vehemently. “Why must everything conform to what You say? Consent to my wishes sometimes at least. Is there to be nothing for my preferences? Why should all be as You wish? Please grant me a sweet voice for chanting Your name otherwise I’ll refuse to do it,” she stated obstinately.

“What is within your control?” asked Baba. “Whether you are allowed to do namasmaran or not is also entirely at My will. Your mind will become your worst enemy, not letting you stay quiet even for a moment and your voice will become intolerably odious. Therefore, gratefully accept your present voice. However, if you are debating on your ability to accomplish everything according to your will then witness tomorrow exactly which actions you can complete at your will,” challenged Baba.

The next day Kamal’s inflamed temper having decidedly cooled, she decided that somehow, she’d attempt a little namasmaran. The outcome would be according to Baba’s will. That afternoon, despite her excellent health, Kamal experienced severe exhaustion without any reasonable cause. Since morning she had determined to attend Anna Maharaj’s discourse but now her condition deteriorated unbelievably to so depressing a degree that she was forced to rest. However, after a short nap, she rose at four thirty wearily compelling her mental and physical faculties to accede to her will and walked towards the ashram. But due to a swimming sensation within she was obliged to rest after only a few steps. This continued for four to five paces. By then the vertigo had increased to such enormous proportions that it was impossible for her to fulfil her mission. Relinquishing her resolve Kamal retraced her steps homewards, with Baba’s words of the night before ringing in her ears. She had literally experienced the truth that no

deviations are possible when confronted with Baba's will. She repented her obstinate attitude, and her devotion for Baba and His worship escalated correspondingly. Her defeat appeared as a victory to her. Precisely like the gopikas who, on being defeated by Krishna Kanaiya, glorified him, their adoration and devoutness expanding, and considered themselves blessed thereby. Kamal's state was not a whit less than their's.

9th August 1978

Today Kamal's mind was preoccupied with the following of Sri Jnaneshwar Maharaj's abhangas:

Vedshastra praman srutichevachanek narayan sar jap
The Vedas, shastras and srutis say that the one name
'Narayan' is the epitome and essence of all japa's and chant.

That evening when Kamal retired for meditation, unexpectedly Jnaneshwar Maharaj manifested seated before her. His visage conveyed his obvious displeasure.

"You are used to singing Baba's bhajans everyday so why are you ceaselessly repeating my abhangas today?" he queried in a sharp tone. "Tell the truth, your devotion is upon Baba alone, is it not? You are cheating both myself and Anna Maharaj. We do not approve of this. Speak the truth. "What I have said is correct, is it not," he challenged.

Cast into this intricately difficult position, what should be her reply? Superficially the conclusions were true. Prior to Baba's advent, indeed she had been magnetically drawn by love towards Jnaneshwar Maharaj and other saints. Subsequently, however, all her devotion and love was directed to Baba. Kamal discreetly maintained a non-committal silence. Jnaneshwar Maharaj reiterated his question a few times. "Do not stay silent or evade my question. Answer truthfully. You have more love for Baba, have you not?" he insisted.

"All Gods are one. I have love towards all," she declared tactfully.

"I have no inclination to hear your philosophy. Reply 'Yes' or 'No'. Your love for Baba is greater, yes?" he persisted.

"Yes, sir, what you have said is correct," she responded.

Jnaneshwar Maharaj brusquely instantaneously vanished in a flurry of fury. The whole episode happened so rapidly that Kamal omitted to touch his holy feet or offer worship. Repenting her momentary lapse sincerely she was deeply grieved. 'What has taken place is not right.' These and similar thoughts perturbed her peace. Inconsolable and desolate she called upon Baba repeatedly. He promptly obliged and Kamal narrated the recent events in detail.

"He left enraged with me. I do not like it," she said.

"He acted correctly. Your devotion for him is greatly diminished. Naturally he is enraged. How resentful would you feel if those who loved you decreased their love, is it not? This is

exactly the same,” said Baba. “Why have you stopped being devoted to him?” He enquired, enjoying Himself.

“Fine, so now I’ll stop doing Your bhakti and start doing his instead. Instead of singing Your bhajans I’ll commence singing Jnaneshwar Maharaj’s abhangs,” she said triumphantly.

“Then I’ll be offended,” replied Baba.

“Alright, You can be offended. You see, I know that You can never be angry with me. Many days ago, You once promised me ‘Whatever happens I’ll never let you go’. These were exactly Your words. Therefore, you can never become angry with me, abandon me upon the path or forget me. You have vowed never to forget me, so I have nothing to worry about,” Kamal concluded her logical reasonings.

“Here I was referring to you as naive and innocent, but you have become very clever indeed. “Bravo,” commended Baba appreciatively and patting Kamal affectionately on the back, He dematerialised.

11th September 1978

In accordance with her prescribed daily routine Kamal settled down for meditation in a tranquil atmosphere. But her mind was restless, agitated and prone to wander aimlessly, unwilling to concentrate. Unable to understand why she petulantly lay down on her mattress. Unaccountably she experienced the sensation of an unknown and invisible entity grasping her hand and pulling her up into a sitting position. Confused, Kamal searched hither and thither for evidence, but her quest was futile. She could see nothing. Deliberately she lay down again to prove conclusively that it was indeed someone who had performed this office and not her imagination, as she suspected. The precocious performance was duplicated. Shrewdly apprehending the implied message, she sat up to attempt meditation, again concentrating her gaze upon Baba’s photograph. As she contemplated it pointedly a vision of Jnaneshwar Maharaj seated in the region of Baba’s heart was visible.

“Jnaneshwar Maharaj how wonderful it would be were you to grant pratyaksh darshan,” she entreated whole heartedly with sincerity. And amazingly, Jnaneshwar Maharaj immediately presented himself, sitting down, as if he had been awaiting the invitation. Glimpsing this, Kamal extended her quivering hand to touch his holy feet. Her closed eyes flickered tremulously. Kamal switched on the light.

“Maharaj! Baba has explained to me that Anna Maharaj is the avatar of Tukaram Maharaj and that he is also Jnaneshwar Maharaj’s avatar. That means that you are my supreme guru. Now will you kindly tell me who and where I was during your Jnaneshwar avatar,” she asked.

“At that time you were a tree in the courtyard of my house,” he began. “When the upper portion of the tree broke and fell there were yet its roots existing beneath a wall close by. Your soul was contained therein. When Changdev Maharaj dispatched a disciple with an initial letter addressed to me, he, the disciple, on his departure took away with him one of the fallen tree’s straight, untwisted branches. He desired it as a token of an auspicious omen from my residence in

addition to the abhang's of Changdev Pashasti which I gave in letter form. Then when Changdev Maharaj visited me himself he carried a cane produced from the branch. When I received the notification of Changdev Maharaj's arrival, we all, brothers and sisters, conversed seated upon the wall. The reason being that we were influenced by the bond between the cane and its former other half beneath the wall which magnetically induced us towards itself. You are already aware of this tale though," he concluded. As Jnaneshwar Maharaj terminated his recitation his countenance progressively transformed into Baba's, ultimately, he vanished completely. Before long Baba manifested in His own form.

"Baba You only informed me of the fact that during Jnaneshwar Maharaj's avatar I was existing as a wall, but he has revealed otherwise," she queried.

"What I told you in brief, he has disclosed in deeper detail," answered Baba. As was His practice everyday Baba executed a recital on His flute and exited.

22nd September 1978

Late at night kamal seated herself for meditation as usual. Very soon she cognised flames, leaping and dancing before her with Baba seated within them. Shortly the blaze calmed, receded and gradually disappeared leaving Baba.

"Your mind is constantly riddled by doubts and uncertainty flourishes on witnessing My various forms. You believe them to be genuinely separate and different. This scepticism refuses to remove from your mind. Therefore, today I have performed the ritual of divine fire before you," said Baba.

"Baba why do You torment Yourself for my sake," asked Kamal painfully.

"Hey, pagali, this relationship of ours is not confined to this birth alone. For many generations I have been sending you in different incarnations, keeping you ever with Me and instructing you in wisdom," responded Baba. "Alright, now I wish to recount certain details relating to your previous births, so listen carefully," He warned. "When I incarnated as Buddha at that time Anna Maharaj was a disciple. When I incarnated as Shirdi Sai Baba then Anna Maharaj was an ascetic and you resided in his courtyard in the form of a cow. Can you remember it? Everyday I would fondly pat and caress your back and occasionally feed you fodder. People daily made offerings to Me, and it was My practice to feed you a small portion as prasad." As Baba divulged this piece of information, Kamal's dormant memory stirred, sensations arose, and her subconscious partially awakened. As Baba gently massaged her back her intuitive perceptions and emotions gained momentum and intensity. "Look, do not differentiate between Myself and Anna Maharaj," He continued. "You always declare that 'Anna is Anna, and you are you'. This is wrong. We are both essentially one, therefore you should consider us so. Because I come here to you every night you assume that I have never seen the ashram. Well, listen closely," He advised. Baba then accurately and in minute detail described each and every item from the front entrance to the back exit of the ashram.

"Baba, this devotee of yours is an entirely illiterate, simple ignorant villager. Had I been wise and intelligent You would never have been caused so much trouble," she explained.

“Accha. Come, let us worship the Shivling together today as we did once before,” said Baba tactfully changing the subject.

As Baba finished this sentence an enormous Shivling and Ganeshji became visible. Baba and Ganeshji were seated on either side of the Shivling. Kamal swiftly garnered the essential requisites necessary for the puja and returned. Baba then presented Kamal with a beautiful golden flower to be offered with namaskar on conclusion of the puja.

“I will not worship three separate forms thus,” she objected. “Show me only one form.”

This problem was uniquely resolved by Baba in an unexpected manner. A vision of a Shivling with Baba seated above it supporting the countenance of Ganeshji miraculously became apparent. Kamal adamantly refused to worship this form. Ultimately, they all vanished and only Baba, in His habitual form and apparel, was visible.

“See, how much suffering I undergo and endure for your sake,” He stated as He gave Kamal another golden flower. “Have you ever seen a flower like this golden one in Anna Maharaj’s possession?” He asked, baiting Kamal.

“In that case you may keep this flower Yourself, I do not need it,” responded Kamal, thoroughly enraged. “What would I do with this flower?” she asked sarcastically.

Baba was extremely amused and smiled happily at the results of His deliberate provocation. “I previously informed you that our bond is for all generations and incarnations. I intentionally create these situations with the sole purpose of establishing your mind in undeviating, permanent stability. I cannot be at peace until you achieve self realisation. You are an inseparable part of Me. I have never undergone such suffering for any other devotee as I have for you. Even so you are failing to understand completely,” said Baba as He donned the guise of Pandurang Bhagawan. His coal black form was attired gracefully in a pitamber and lavishly adorned with numerous glittering, jewels and ornaments.

“Baba, what is all this? Why are You harassing me?” she asked exasperated.

“I am not playing tricks on you but merely revealing darshanik glimpses of My past avatars,” replied Baba.

“In this fashion you are casting me into confusing dilemmas. You are raising anxious doubts and complications in my mind which mock me. Mercifully cease these tricks. Right now, I have no wish for any kind of salvation,” said Kamal.

The one who has entangled the whole world in His net of maya, the sustainer and provider of the oppressed and poor, who helps His devotees across the ocean of samsar, who entwined and immersed the gopikas in His skein of rapturous, soul stirring ecstatic love; the same bewitching enthrallingly mischievous Baba laughed engagingly and extracting a few dulcet tunes from His flute departed.

23rd September 1978

Kamal set off early at eight in the morning with the express purpose of executing an errand at the post office. On returning she made a detour to visit Anna Maharaj for darshan. After whiling away a few pleasant hours there she wended her way home at about 1.30pm. She was greeted by an uproar due to the invasion of an immense cobra which had gained admittance into the family home, swiftly investigated the various nooks and crannies and then exited. As Kamal's husband was absent on business her brother-in-law cautioned her, "Only moments ago a large cobra sneaked into the house so keep the doors closed, warn the children and keep a sharp look out yourself."

Kamal was thrilled and happy that Baba had at least granted darshan to her family in the form of a snake (representative of Shiva). But her enthusiasm overshadowed her discretion and she confided her views to the family. They evidenced their displeasure in no uncertain terms. "Wonderful this Baba of yours," they said. "He scares little children! What if anything serious had happened?"

Actually, in truth, the family treated the tales of Baba's visitations as a topic for general amusement and pointed ridicule. Whenever they caught sight of a cockroach, dog or lizard they would jeeringly snigger "Look, look perhaps that also is your Baba."

Although by now accustomed to these insensitive and cruel remarks, naturally they still penetrated her pure heart causing her considerable sorrow. And so, it was today as she asked, "Where did the cobra eventually go?"

She was informed that it had fled across the courtyard and descended down the stairway near the wall into a mouse hole. She was further strictly enjoined to stay away herself and deter the children from approaching the vicinity. Contrary to their well meaning instructions Kamal intentionally entered the restricted area and prayed, "You have compassionately bestowed the blessing of darshan on my family for which I am eternally grateful."

On Kamal's laudable commendation the cobra emerged from its hole and fully revealed itself, flaring its hood in acceptance of her praise, afterwards immediately vanishing into its lair.

24th September 1978

Kamal was temporarily indisposed with her regular monthly cycle and in this instance by an additional mild attack of fever. Therefore, she abstained from bathing and her paduka puja. In truth, she personally entertained no qualms or hesitation on her own behalf in relation to ritualistic impurity. She refrained from her daily disciplines purely in deference to the social restrictions fostered by society and her family's scrupulous adherence to them.

However, late that night Kamal was unaccountably perturbed by a barrage of notions all expressly whispering, 'At least you should take tirth from the photograph'. As she looked at Anna Maharaj's photograph, she became aware of numerous tiny photographs of Baba in its place. They were pushing, squeezing and intermingling as they circled within the frame. They whirled, swirled and danced in eddies as in a whirlpool, the waves of a river or the churning of yogurt by a whisk. Clearly depicted in all the photographs was Baba's expression of irritable disquietude and anger. Her own composure badly affected, she sat before Baba's photograph, hands folded in

prayer, seeking the cause for Baba's visible rage. Attributing it to an unwitting error committed by herself she humbly begged for forgiveness.

Approximately half an hour ticked by, and it was soon approaching ten thirty in the evening when she glanced at the photograph again. The vision had vanished and in its place a cobra was visible. God's forms are limitless. Kamal accepted this as another of Baba's countless guises and immediately engaged herself in collecting the items needed for worship. But as she assembled her requisites, she was again constantly confronted by those silent circling photographs wherever she looked. Somehow, she succeeded in her task of gathering the articles and conducting puja and drinking the holy tirth. From the darshans of His other forms Kamal experienced an altogether different joy (less intense) than the bliss she experienced in Baba's actual presence, even though the emotions arising in her heart comforted her with 'This is also one of Baba's forms'. Ruminating in this way Kamal sat peacefully immersed in meditation. Soon her senses indicated that Naag Devta had entwined himself firmly around her frame. Opening her eyes she was shocked to find her surmise a fact. Naag Devta's coils held her in a light yet steady embrace and its hood swayed overhead as the long-forked tongue flicked in and out. All movement was restricted. However, that was not Kamal's major concern. Disturbed by the thought of her family's reaction on seeing her in this, to them, dangerous situation, she gently stretched her arms to reach a sheet which she threw over herself. Having forestalled any outburst from them she quietly closed her eyes. Soon she felt her body to be loosened and unfettered, freed from its captivity. She opened her eyes to find herself the sole occupant of the room, Naag Devta had departed. Furthermore, Anna Maharaj had been reinstalled in his former position in the frame. Suddenly another photograph dropped mysteriously from above containing a picture of Anna Maharaj which unbelievably altered into the forms of Baba, Mama Maharaj and Anna Maharaj. Enthralled by the fluctuating vision before her, her attention was riveted one pointedly on the fascinating photograph. She yearned for it to remain in her possession and not disappear. Claspng it firmly with both hands and gazing at it unblinkingly, Kamal was determined to retain it and refuse to return it even were Baba to ask for it. To preclude this eventuality, she lovingly concealed the object of her desire within her hands and glanced up, only to see that Anna Maharaj's photo frame was devoid of a photograph again. An enigmatic voice issued from behind her.

"So, you are intending to impress your will upon God? If you indulge in this egoism, you will forfeit all that you have acquired till now," cautioned the disembodied voice.

Hearing these words of warning Kamal instantly relinquished the photograph and placed it on the ground. Baba manifested.

"Many times, I accede to your wishes. However, this does not mean that I will always do so or that I should do so. Whatever is beneficial for each individual and what should be done for anyone at any time is known only to Me. If today, yielding to your desire, I give you this photograph you will forsake your responsibilities and confine your days to dedicatedly gazing at it. All your duties and chores will be abandoned. Think, what would happen then?" asked Baba.

Falling at Baba's feet, and clasping them tightly, Kamal pleaded, "Pray forgive me Baba. I'll never be so stubborn again. I am totally surrendered at Your feet, but I beseech You please give me this photograph. I long to show it to everyone. Baba You are unaware of the immense bliss they will experience on seeing it. Please give me the photograph Baba," she entreated. Kamal was obsessively impatient to show this wonderful miraculous photograph to all.

"Accha, take it," Baba replied.

Kamal was reluctant to accept the photograph herself, so she requested Baba to prop it up against a wall. She was spellbound, mesmerised by this weird and wonderfully bewitching photograph. Her gaze fell upon the transmuting images of Anna Maharaj, Mama Maharaj and Baba, and occasionally all three simultaneously. Completely engrossed in the mystical vision, she was oblivious to her surroundings, the world and her obligations. Everything else ceased to exist. Only the moorthis were worthy of attention. Abruptly it vanished. Only then, awakening from her dream world did Kamal realise that it was well past midnight and unknown to her Baba had already played the flute and departed.

25th September 1978

As usual, once Kamal was submerged in contemplative meditation Baba manifested. Kamal reopened the topic of dissension and stubbornly took up the cudgels on behalf of her friend Shakutai. (Her insistence being that Baba should graciously bestow His darshan likewise upon Shakutai). Whenever Kamal initiated this subject Baba would appear angry. Today was no exception.

"I have favoured you with darshan, have I not?" He retorted huffily. "Worry about yourself. What have you to do with others? When I am inclined to award her darshan I will do so. There is no need for you to continuously remind Me."

"Up until now You have not once graced her with Your darshan. In reality how can the mind be satisfied with one darshan Baba? Actually, You deny Your darshan to those who are eligible and deserving. Contrarily, why do You repeatedly bestow Your darshans on me? Seriously, Shakutai craves Your darshan infinitely more than me. How she fervently yearns for Your darshan. I am acquainted with quite a few of Your devotees who are desperate for Your darshan. They aspire more than me for Your divine revelation. I believe that their devotion is so much superior to my own. Why don't You bestow Your darshan upon them?" she argued.

"I am far more aware than you as to the calibre and depth of anyones devotion and who merits and should be accorded My darshan," replied Baba loftily. "It is unnecessary for you to explain to Me. I am fully familiar with the degree and intensity of everyones love and devotion and also which person is steadfast and which person is not. Certain people entertain a temporary devotion motivated by circumstances which later evaporates as situations alter. However, I am not implying that this transient devotion is without use or benefit. Notwithstanding this, My grace will descend in the form of instant darshan once their devotion increases singularly and is regulated by discipline," promised Baba.

“Baba! Shakutai’s devotion is uninterrupted. She so desires Your darshan. Please grant her Your actual presence as You do to me. If You object to awarding darshan to her alone then grant it to us both together. Then I’ll cease to adopt this obstinate attitude,” she vowed.

“You are qualified to express your own opinions but how can you presume to give the ideas, desires and inclinations of others? How do you know whether her purpose is to seek darshan in your company or not? Are you even aware of whether she cherishes a desire for darshan or not? And if so whether alone or with you? Nevertheless, the principle prerequisite is that whosoever craves My darshan must personally approach Me themselves. What necessity is there to be accompanied by others or delegate others to represent your case? No additional benefit can be derived from this. For example, it is essential that he who wishes to purchase articles visits the bazaar himself. However, if he deputises another to execute his errand then an error is inevitable; the wrong item will probably be purchased. The variety in materials, brands and quality is stupendous therefore how can another guess accurately? In this instance even the shopkeeper will advise that the purchaser attends in person and selects the required article. Hence, only the person concerned can correctly express his own preferences and wishes. Each devotee’s disposition, temperament and addictions are unique, and their predilections and inclinations are dependent upon them. Hence what was ardently aspired to by the Gopikas, Tulsidas, Narsi Mehta, Tukaram, Namdev and other saints cannot be sought by other persons of ordinary stamp. Why digress to the distant past? It is rare for any other woman to ask for or display a penchant for the spiritual leanings and desires expressed by you. Imitation pays no dividends in devotional practices. I wish to inform you of one other item; just as a delicious meals’ enjoyment is destroyed by storing it and partaking of it in small doses, similarly you are ruining your bliss by repeatedly raising this subject. On every occasion you dig up this old topic to haggle over. How many times have I cautioned you that you will only harm yourself by persisting in this? Your own love and devotion for God will diminish,” said Baba as He concluded His censorious lecture.

Kamal prostrated at His feet, “Baba please pardon my error. I surrender totally at Your lotus feet. Never allow my devotion to decrease. On the contrary, graciously let it increase daily. Even so my entreaty is that You confer Your darshan on others,” pleaded Kamal.

“I will fulfil your wish, but you are never to raise this point with Me again,” warned Baba, and then He miraculously vanished.

28th September 1978

It being Ekadashi and a Thursday, on conclusion of the bhajans and after departure of the guests, Kamal broke her fast in the company of her family. Subsequently everyone but Kamal retired for the night. Resting on the sacks of cotton on the verandah she plunged within the core of her being, conscious only of the self effulgent soul, all other thoughts and considerations obliterated completely. In meditation Kamal attained the immanent heights which are impossible for ordinary persons to reach or experience. To the unsuspecting it appeared as if Kamal was merely seated silently with eyes closed. As it happened Kamal’s husband desired to attend the bhajans at the mandir and was therefore helplessly searching for a lantern and matches. His

attempts to gain Kamal's absent attention proved futile. "Where are the matches," he called out a number of times.

Kamal was blissfully oblivious. Finally, employing a strident tone, he chided and shook her frequently to draw her attention. A soft, faraway sound filtered slowly through to the subconscious mists of her mind, but she was powerless to formulate a reply. With extreme exertion and effort, she managed a faint, barely audible murmur causing herself pain in the process. Kamal's husband was incapable of comprehending her condition. He discovered the matches but with the lantern yet missing he unleashed his rage on his oblivious wife. At this outburst his niece, Mangal, offered the information that her father had already left with the lantern. Kamal's husband, in an inflamed fury, lay down and tried to sleep without success. He tossed and turned restlessly, frequently glancing at Kamal. He noticed that the coverlet had fallen away from the children, and they were curled up in a huddle to keep warm. "Why, can't you see? Cover them properly with the sheet," he ordered.

On this command being repeated it eventually struck a chord in her subconsciousness and, unwittingly like a sleepwalker, she approached the divan and covered the children with the sheet. She then at once submerged within herself once more. Baba materialised in five minutes and commenced an enchantingly haunting dance accompanied by celestial instruments from whence heavenly music issued. Half an hour was devoured in this angelic activity. The divinely soft dulcet tones were apparent although there were no visible accoutrements or musicians. Kamal was spellbound by the ravishingly nectarine tones issuing from them. Listening alertly, she became cognisant of all the instruments involved; the harmonium, flute, sitar, tabla, veena mridang, manjiras, guitar and conch. Together they generated an unimaginably sublime and captivating rhapsody which delectably seduced the mind. Soon the instruments became visible though the musicians yet retained their anonymity. They were expertly played upon in melodious rhythm with Baba's gracefully swaying dance, which gained momentum as the tempo increased. Kamal, however, purposely avoided the dance as she disliked and disapproved of such overt displays. Her gaze was riveted on the instruments, deliberately ignoring Baba's enticing routine. Baba, perhaps offended, disappeared. Kamal, bereft and heartbroken pleaded that He return urgently.

Baba obliged, "Why! didn't you like My dance?" He asked.

"No! absolutely not!" replied Kamal, not mincing matters.

Baba repeated His question four to five times and Kamal responded negatively 'No, definitely not'.

"In that case how is it you like Krishna's dancing?" He asked.

"I do not like that either. Since when have I expressed any views on my approval of Krishna's dancing? Perhaps others enjoy it, I do not. You may reveal any other vision to me but dance. I have an aversion to it," she declared.

"What if I like it and desire to dance, what then?" asked Baba teasingly.

“Not even then,” replied Kamal unrelenting.

“What a clash of opposites. Accha, I’ll not show you dancing again,” He promised.

“Baba forgive me. It is not for me to say such things to You. You are God and I am an ordinary mortal. I should not speak so insolently. I have erred so please pardon me. But what can I do? I truly dislike dancing. However, if at any time I fancy seeing it I’ll inform You, then You can show me,” she added.

Baba disappeared without warning and in His place Bhagawan Shivaji manifested. An awe-inspiring sight with a tiger skin wrapped around the waist, snakes hissing around his neck, the holy Ganges cascading from his matted locks, a damaru and trishul in his hands and rudraksha bead mala encircling his neck and arms. Such was his ash smeared commanding form.

“Who are you,” asked Kamal.

“Who are you who so impertinently asks me that question?” he countered. And posing the trishul defiantly before Kamal, “Do puja to this,” he ordered.

Kamal courteously obliged upon which Shivaji embarked on the swirling, rhythmic intensely motivated tandav dance. As she watched, tears glistened and fell from her eyes. Whether they were of sorrow or delight was a mystery even to Kamal. Shivaji concluded his energetic gyrations and vanished as did his trishul. Baba now reappeared. Kamal reopened the former topic of contention in a sharply aggressive tone, “I have already told You, have I not, that I dislike dance? Even so why did You show me this?” she said petulantly.

“You persist in avowing your aversion to dance, then why these tears of joy?” He enquired. “I want to know who are your chosen deities and whom do you worship,” asked Baba.

“Baba, You have again started speaking in riddles. In this manner You continuously pose problems for me. First tell me, where were You hiding during the dance?” she asked.

“Where was I hiding? Why here behind you of course. But you were too engrossed in watching the dance to notice,” He replied.

“Absolutely not. I searched in all directions, and You were not present. Now tell the truth, You donned Shivaji’s form and performed the dance, did You not? Why are You denying it? Then perhaps Shivaji manifested in Your form. From out of these two options, one must be true,” she concluded logically.

“Hey Pagali, neither Shivaji nor any other deity can appear in My form. I am speaking the absolute truth. Accha, now tell Me, who performed the dance,” asked Baba interestedly.

“At this moment I cannot see anyone else present other than You and me. Now, You insist that You did not perform the dance, therefore I must have done so. Many times, You have explained to me that the one God resides in all beings. That the whole universe resides in him and

that he is present in each and every atom. Hence there is no distinction. You did not dance so I certainly must have done so for you are also resident in Me, are you not?" asked Kamal.

"What are you saying? You danced! But you were saying that you disliked to even watch a dance so how did you perform it?" asked an amused Baba.

"How I did it I do not know, but I did," replied Kamal, by now unable to believe her own words.

Baba openly stared at Kamal with blatant curiosity. Embarrassed, Kamal covered her face. The notion flashed across her mind 'What if Baba requested her to reperform the dance again? What would she do? How would she do it?' However, Baba simply silently seated Himself before her with closed eyes. Kamal, following Baba's example, also sat down and soon dived deep into the depths of meditation. Within moments, her especially distinctive bodily turmoil began (when a spiritual aspirant attains a particularly elevated stage in meditation he experiences the manifestation of certain powers within his body; in fact, divine power gains admittance and communion results and he transcends various yogic stages which in the natural state would be insurmountable. I have referred to this as 'especially distinctive bodily turmoil'). Inexplicably the unusual query arose in her mind as to whether Baba also underwent similar experiences during deep meditation. Kamal, disrupting her concentration, opened her eyes to look. Simultaneously, Baba also opened His eyes and fixing her with a penetrating speculative stare He divined her recent thoughts. With the advice that during meditation such unwelcome thoughts should be forcefully ejected, He vanished. Kamal closed her eyes and attempted to recapture her former immersed state. Instantly Gopal Krishna manifested before her. He was beautiful to behold with a glittering crown and peacock feathers rakishly set therein, jewels adorning his neck, a gorgeous pitamber flowing in graceful folds, a flute tucked at the waist and adorable tender feet charmingly set in a nonchalant pose. This was the ravishing form present before Kamal. His childhood playmates frolicked sportively as cows gambolled in between. Krishna, taking the flute, tapped Kamal on the head with it. Immediately all the friends and cows dropped unconscious to the ground.

"Hey Gopal, what is this that's happened," she asked distressed. "Why have they all died so suddenly? Please restore them to life," she pleaded.

"What do you want with them? How many times have I enjoined you to look only to yourself, your own welfare? But if they are to be restored to life then I must hit you forcefully on the head," he said.

"Then hit me," offered Kamal.

Gopal Krishna complied and soon the playmates and cows returned to life and continued with their pranks and games as if nothing had happened. However, now Gopal Krishna disappeared and without his presence the vision appeared incomplete. Agitated and disheartened she entreated Gopal to return. He mercifully manifested but raised the flute intending to hit Kamal's head once more. Kamal swiftly captured it midway. Krishna's countenance transformed into Baba's.

“Why have you seized My flute,” He asked innocently.

“If You were to hit me with the flute this vision will change. And if they were all to die, how can I gain bliss from it?” replied Kamal.

“You have still not relinquished your obstinacy. Do not make any comments regarding the gopis and gopikas in this vision. I have ordered you to cease intervening and meddling on behalf of others, but you do not listen,” complained Baba.

The lively vision reappeared with Krishna blithely playing his flute as he merrily jaunted and jubilantly sported with his playmates. The cows genially joined in, frisking here, there and everywhere. Kamal was caught up and enmeshed in that celestial bliss. Suddenly Baba reappeared and the ravishing vision vanished.

“Accha, are you satisfied now? So am I. Enough is enough. Your wilfulness has reached the limit. Which should it be? That God should pay heed to the devotees wishes or the devotee to Gods? I accede to all your requests but you, you refuse to assent to any of Mine. Always for carrying out your own preferences and inclinations. I think perhaps its time I searched for other devotees,” stated Baba.

“Yes, yes it’s time You sought other devotees!” mimicked Kamal sarcastically. “What necessity is there to ‘search’? You have no lack of devotees!” she added.

At this Baba extended his hand to offer Kamal prasad. She grasped it and clutched it desperately, “Truly, will You leave me and go?” asked Kamal as her heart contracted in fear.

“Yes,” stated Baba.

Kamal, unbelieving, reiterated her question thrice and thrice Baba replied in the affirmative. Baba gradually, gracefully, ever so slowly floated backward; both pairs of eyes were locked upon each other. After first receding into the distance, it then appeared as if Baba was swiftly racing towards Kamal. Instantly rising, Kamal fell at Baba’s feet, clasping that adorable refuge, as joy coursed in undulating waves through her heart.

“Though I say this, I can truly never forget you. If I ever say this again, you are not to be frightened because I’ll never be able to forget you. I’ll never be able to leave you,” promised Baba.

29th September 1978

On this day Baba arrived remarkably early, between seven and eight in the evening. Kamal joyously said, “Please, You must always come at this time. If You come during the day, afternoon or early evening it is possible for me to offer You tea, milk and food. At night it is not practical. Actually, even during the day sometimes there is no milk available in my house, as is the case today. But it is my wish to prepare and serve You with tea today.”

“Your eager desire is to make tea and only the milk is lacking. That is all, is it not?” clarified Baba. “Go, look outside in the courtyard. Sri Krishna Bhagawan’s cow has arrived and is standing there. See how beautiful she is. Go and milk her and make tea for Me,” He said.

On investigation Kamal was flabbergasted to discover so sleek and lovely a cow in her courtyard. Commandeering a pan she advanced towards the cow. But as she approached it, unaccountably she felt frightened and asked, “Baba, will You not milk it for me?”

Baba briskly fulfilled the task and soon handed Kamal the pan containing the milk. Kamal boiled the water, as usual adding the other ingredients later and the milk last of all. However, fearing that the tea might be too hot to drink from a cup she poured it into a plate and served Baba thus. Relishing the tea Baba quickly consumed half of it without a murmur. Kamal casually glanced into the pan and was horrified by the sight before her. For the tea was unnaturally yellow in hue with ghee, cummin seeds and rhy floating on top. Distressed by this apparent disaster she wondered how it could have occurred. She had correctly made the tea. How had all these foreign entities found their way into it? It had the complexion of dal rather than tea. Her face puckering up with tears she pleaded with Baba, “Baba please excuse me. I really do not know what I’ve served You,” said a mortified Kamal. “I prepared the tea appropriately, so how did it become dal? How did You manage to drink it? I’ll make another cup of tea for You.”

“No, give it to Me as it is. I’m thoroughly enjoying this tea!” replied Baba.

When the tea had virtually all been consumed and the pot was almost empty, curious, Kamal tested a few drops of the tea by dipping in her finger. She was violently shocked for it was pungent and hot, tasting like a combination of boiled water and chillies. Though her sense of hospitality was offended she discreetly maintained her silence. Soon they rose in silence and went outside into the courtyard. Kamal watched in wide eyed astonishment as the cow gradually diminished in size until it transmuted into a tiny form of Baba and merged in Him. Kamal gaped in awe-stricken wonder at this display of God’s omnipotence. This Swami, Lord and ruler of the entire cosmos unfolds thousands of prodigious marvels for her edification, drinks her sharp chilli teas without complaint and bears with her harsh remonstrations and arguments without a murmur. Why all this? How does it happen? Her eyes overflowed with diamond tear drops of intermingled joy and sorrow.

“Baba what deeds of merit have I done in return for which You visit me day, night and afternoon within the home and without? You fulfil every wish of mine. No matter what I say or the number of errors I commit You are never enraged. On the contrary, You continually favour me with Your company, prasad and love. Which virtuous deed did I do in a previous birth that I am in receipt of Your unlimited grace?” asked Kamal feelingly.

“To you this behaviour appears contradictory,” He replied. “Your supposition is correct according to your limited understanding, but there is much information that you do not know. Listen. On one occasion you were born as a cat and lived in a pious brahmin household. In that home all religious rites were performed daily, including puja archana, bhajans, devotions and so on. One day it happened that after puja you were seated in the room when the oil in the lamp was low and the flame flickered, preparing for extinction. Straightaway you went to the house next door where another man had also lit a lamp following his devotions to Mahasoba (a deity). On seeing that lamp, you remembered the failing flame in your home, so you removed the burning lamp with your mouth and placed it in the lamp in your own home. Instantly Krishna manifested before this cat. But what could a cat say? It simply prostrated by placing its two front paws and

head on the ground in obeisance. It prayed mentally, 'If I had human birth, I too would do puja and archana.' Such was the cat's desire. Subsequently you received this human birth," concluded Baba.

On hearing this incredible tale Kamal became aware of a small white stone idol of Sri Ram in her hands. It was akin to a lovely doll with movable hands and feet. Kamal made obeisance to the idol and asked, "Baba how has this idol come into my hands. Where has it come from?"

"Ram Bhagawan is the very breath of your life. This idol belongs to your sadguru," replied Baba.

"Kamal you are extremely fortunate for I am pleased with you. Speak, what do you want?" asked the idol of Sri Ram of an astounded Kamal.

"Besides you, what else can I ask for? I pray that you confer on me bhakthi, service of your lotus feet and namasmaran," stated Kamal humbly.

"Until today no one has ever asked for such a boon from me. Many devotees have requested a variety of things, but I am highly delighted with your petition," responded a joyful Sri Ram. "Bravo," he added as he patted her back in appreciation.

"Come. Today we will both visit the Mahadev temple in your village. But first I must inform you of something; at the mandir we will meet a large snake who will come hissing towards you, you must not be frightened. Instead, you are to put your hand in his mouth," warned Baba.

"Fine," agreed Kamal.

All three, Baba, Kamal and Sri Ram wended their way to the mandir. On reaching there, she saw an enormous snake coiled around the Shivling. Previously Kamal had witnessed massive snakes even at close quarters but had never evinced the least fear of them. However today, for a few moments, she was terrified. Then she recollected Baba's injunction 'not to fear' and her terror fled leaving her bold and courageous.

"Baba my heart yearns to worship this Shivling, but I lack the necessary articles," said Kamal.

Within a twinkling Baba presented her with a puja tray containing all the requirements, gesturing 'Go and do puja.' Kamal hesitantly advanced, and then intrepidly taking hold of Naag Devta's hooded fan with one hand she daringly unwound its coils with the other. Ritually completing the worship, she offered her hand into Naagraj's mouth (at an indication from Baba) repeating 'Om Sai Ram' all the while. Naag Devta bit her tender hand severely as poison dripped from its fangs. Kamal felt that her final moments had arrived; her body was numb as the venom coursed through her veins. Her hands and feet were lifeless as a dark blanket of night swept across her vision. However, even in this death like condition, slipping, swaying, falling and rising as one intoxicated, she performed puja to Sri Ram and Baba. Her whole frame then seized and froze, as paralysis induced a state of suspended animation. In that state Kamal witnessed an

incredible phenomenon. Bhagawan Shivaji manifested from her own heart and proceeded to suck the poison from her body. Shivaji's colour changed to a bluish black hue as evidence of the venom consumed by him became visible. Large boil-like spots formed over his body from which the skin flaked and fell to the ground. Anguished at this turn of events Kamal beseeched, "No! Shivaji no! Do not drink my poison. I cannot bear to look upon this afflicted condition of yours. Please do not take on this torture for my sake. What am I? Let me die. Look at what is happening to you," she wailed.

She frantically hoped that somehow his suffering could be alleviated. She could not understand how. What should she do? Desperate and distraught Kamal began to eat all the venomful flakes of skin which had fallen from Bhagawan Shivaji. At this supreme act of sacrifice Naagraj advanced and sweeping his hood on all sides, duly worshipped the Shivling, Baba and Sri Ram. Then he made obeisance to all. Approaching Shivaji and Kamal he drained the poison from their bodies. They were both restored to their former state of normality. Nothing remained of the previous horror and pain.

"Now I am going to blindfold you with a handkerchief and we three (Sri Ram, Baba and Shivaji) will stand before you. You are to place your hand upon the head of the one you most believe in. We will assume that you are more devoted to that deity," said Baba calmly as if nothing had taken place.

Kamal, without thinking, deliberating or deciding moved forward and placed her hand. She was stupefied to see on opening her eyes her hand upon all three heads. Unbelievably they were all contained under her hand.

"Look, superficially, you believe that each is separate and individual. That this is Baba, this Sri Ram and this Shivaji, but internally in the purity of your heart you know and realise us all to be one. That is as it should be, even though you fail to comprehend this yourself. This episode was organised to instruct you in this truth," concluded Baba.

"Keep these for your worship," said Shivaji, immensely pleased as he handed Kamal four golden Shivlings.

"What need is there for these golden Shivlings when you are all present before me in person?" asked Kamal.

Then and there the golden Shivlings vanished as mysteriously as they had appeared, but not before they had all duly worshipped them. Then all four; Baba, Shivaji, Sri Ram and Naagraj accompanied her home.

"If at any other time you wish it, we will gladly bestow darshan," they promised. Moving towards Kamal's puja place they disappeared. The regular ritual of the flute was conducted in the ethereal disembodied state after which Kamal fell fast asleep.

30th September 1978

One morning at eleven o'clock Kamal was busily engaged in cooking the midday meal when Baba appeared. "Come, get up. Today I'll cook and you eat," offered Baba.

A unique ecstasy of love filled and overflowed her heart. Today Baba had come during the day and, like her, was preparing the food.

“Now I will show the whole family. See! You did not believe and trust in me. Now see with your own eyes whether Baba really comes to me or not,” said Kamal joyfully. Inflated with bliss she floated on air. Kamal communicated these views to Baba.

“You need not be so happy. When Krishna Bhagawan conferred clandestine darshans on the gopikas the other people present could not perceive anything. And nothing was visible to the thousands surrounding Arjun when he was blessed with Viswaswarup darshan. Similarly, what is perceptible to you cannot be seen by any other,” Baba explained.

“Baba! Anna Maharaj transcribes all my experiences and numerous people have already read them including my family. However, even so, my family and many others don’t believe and place no trust in them. But if You will grace them with this type of darshan, if only once, they will understand everything, and it will generate faith. Then they too will share in the bliss which at present only I experience,” supplicated Kamal imploringly.

“Your family, Shakutai and the others, why, are they only yours? They are Mine also. They are My devotees as well. Accha, will you give Me lunch now, I wish to go?” said Baba

“Help Yourself and eat it. I will not serve You,” replied Kamal peevishly.

Baba, taking a little food in his hand, ate it as sombre silence reigned. “Shall I go now?” queried Baba.

“Yes, You may go. I am not preventing You. Had You upheld my side even a trifle I would have listened to You. Now the relationship between us is at an end,” Kamal rashly said.

Baba responded with, “Accha, fine,” covered the chappattis with leaf covers and left.

CHAPTER 4

1st October 1978

On Sunday night at eleven Kamal retired for meditation. Apprehension clutched her heart as one and a half hours later Baba had still not made an appearance. Before long, it was two o'clock, Baba's usual visiting hour. Kamal again delved into her inner consciousness in deep dedication. Fifteen to twenty minutes later Baba manifested. Baba's countenance bore an even more serious expression than usual as He sat down in solemn silence. Inferring that perhaps Baba was angry, she solicitously enquired.

"No, I'm not angry," Baba replied. "It's just that in Bombay a devotee of mine is in dire distress, and I must go to him."

"Baba You are making excuses, are You not? I know perfectly well that You are the absolute eternal infinite brahmananda. In the Krishna avatar each gopi had her own Krishna who danced the raas with her. You explained this to Naradji and also that You were personally present with each and every wife of Yours at her apartment. I am aware that without leaving here You can still aid Your devotee. There is no necessity for You to go from here," she concluded wisely.

"No, I really must go. What you have said is not incorrect. But what I have to do is known only to Me. You have been ardently expecting Me since eleven o'clock, hence I have come for a short while. Within these last two hours I have conferred darshan on one hundred and fifty devotees and there is yet one place remaining to visit. From morning to now I have eaten nothing so I'm very hungry. Give Me something to eat," said Baba looking the picture of forlorn innocence.

"Baba You always request the impossible at improbable times entangling me in dilemmas. You know that I'm poor so what can there possibly be in my house to eat at two in the morning? There is nothing," she replied in exasperation.

Baba rose and entering the kitchen began a search for edibles. In a basket He discovered a teaspoon of ground peanuts which He consumed with enjoyment. Kamal offered a glass of water which Baba drank. After executing His nightly ritual of playing the flute Baba prepared to depart. Usually, Baba would appear and disappear from one spot but today He walked outside and vanished.

3rd October 1978

On Tuesday night Baba arrived unduly early and sat silently for five minutes, then suddenly rising He said, "Come, I'll take you somewhere."

"Where will we go at this time? Let's leave it," replied Kamal.

"No, you must come," He said. And they both set off. The path was stony and difficult to traverse with a dense forest like jungle looming on either side. As the uneven road ended, they

were confronted by thick impenetrable vegetation from the dark interior of which a strange and terrifying chorus emanated. Apprehensively Kamal clasped Baba's hand. "Baba hold my hand tightly. Do not go anywhere," she said.

The path narrowed to perhaps less than a foot in width with trees lining either side and their thick abundant foliage intermingling skywards, blocking the starry firmament from view. Their passage seemed like a dim, dark, deep tunnel. As they travelled along, a short distance away a faint light was perceptible, and Kamal discerned that two tiny paths converged from right and left. As they advanced, from the left an enormous lion emerged roaring, displaying shining white teeth as it raced headlong towards them. From the right a fearful creature approached, with black hairs over its entire body. It walked on two feet like a gorilla and had human looking hands. Like a ponderous black mountain, it headed for them emitting, alarming, cries. Suddenly directly in front of them a long snake-like life form of dreadful appearance, its hooded fan flared like a dragon, appeared before them. Trembling with fear Kamal clutched Baba's hand, squeezing closer to Him. Baba calmly smiled and looked on.

"Baba such terrible animals are approaching, and You are laughing? I'm only alive at this moment because I'm holding onto Your hand otherwise, I'd have fallen unconscious long ago. Baba don't leave me at this time now. What will I do if You go? Baba, please do not desert me," pleaded Kamal.

Baba suddenly vanished. Confounded, Kamal searched for Him. Her feet and body stone-like, leaden, weighed heavily, making movement impossible. Pathetically harrowed, she sat down by the path. Immediately the three animals leapt closer, within six inches of Kamal and raised a royal commotion with their combined shrieks, yells, roars and screams. Their foul, putrid breath wafted around her as the warm stinking air contacted her body and senses. Her vision blurred, unable to bear this horrendous sight, she closed her eyes. 'These animals will not permit me to live so I'll irritate them too,' she thought.

Confronted by the petrifying gruesome face of death her own intimidating dread dispersed. Kamal intrepidly grabbed hold of the snake-like beings' hood, shaking it furiously and grasping the fur of the gorilla form she pulled at it with all her strength. Then, prising open the lion's jaws, she boldly put her hand inside. To her unbelievable astonishment they did absolutely nothing, so Kamal once again placed her hand in the jaws of the lion. Nothing happened for a while, then without warning the jaws snapped shut. Taking their cue the other two life forms also assailed her. The snake nipped and bit her feet. Kamal noticed a stream of red blood flowing from her wounded hands and feet. 'Is there so much blood in my body?' she asked herself. She fell unconscious unable to sustain the sight of so much blood. Later when Kamal regained her senses, she was amazed to discover nothing was amiss. Her body was intact without so much as a scratch, but the three animals were still by her side. Laughing now she offered obeisance to them.

"Baba has organised this drama to scare me, has He not? Through fear my life was slowly slipping away but now I will no longer be afraid. My pranams to the three of you," said Kamal calmly.

Instantly the three life forms drew closer and closer to each other until finally they intermingled and merged together. Kamal, frightened and at the same time astonished, turned her gaze towards their feet. Joy blossomed within as she realised their feet were attired in sandals and were of human form. Her eyes swept fleetingly up and down. As she gazed upwards fear gripped her but on looking down it disintegrated for, they were the feet of Dattatreya guru. After several such appraisals she flung herself at his feet clasping them. Lying fully prostrate she mentally implored Baba and Dattatreya guru to come. Shortly, Kamal experienced a flood of bubbling energy and power surfacing from within her. Kamal raised her head. The forms were the now familiar ones, the only difference being that she was no longer possessed by any fear at all. Standing, she lovingly gazed upon them in an attitude of amicability, placing her hand gently on their heads. As she contacted the soft, curly fur of their heads the three forms vanished. In their place Baba was now visible.

However, on this particular occasion Kamal experienced no corresponding bliss. She had no desire to engage in conversation with Baba. Turning her back on Him she swiftly raced along the route they had both come. Kamal's only discernable and uppermost consideration was that she wanted to return home. Baba followed suit and ran behind her in pursuit. Kamal briskly increased her speed whilst constantly glancing over her shoulder. Baba was only a short distance away. Surprised she wondered, 'Why did not Baba catch her? Could she be running at such speed?' The path being scattered with stones, pebbles and grit creaked and crackled loudly as she sped on. But the agitating thoughts as to why Baba failed to overtake and capture her continued to oscillate in her mind. 'There must be some hidden purpose of Baba's to this,' she concluded.

And so, it proved. Whilst running she suddenly realised that contrary to her expectations she was not, as she had supposed, running homewards but towards the very spot where they had met the three beings. Her intention was to run in the opposite direction therefore how and why could this happen? Perplexed and frightened she halted and, turning, called out to Baba and proceeded to make her way towards Him. However, Baba now faced the other direction and commenced running. With reversed roles, Baba in front and Kamal in the rear, they raced along for sometime and again mysteriously arrived at the same spot. Baba promptly vanished again as the three animals reappeared. Kamal called out to Baba but to no avail. But now promising herself not to be infiltrated with fear she thought, 'I'll see what happens.' Upon which deliberation she calmly seated herself on the path and attempted to concentrate whilst meditating on Baba. Kamal was deeply penitent of her actions in having turned her back on Baba, abandoning Him to return home and of being enraged with Him. Disturbed to distraction she wept earnestly begging His pardon. Her body trembled as tears swelled in a stream of sorrow. She repeatedly pleaded for Baba's return. Ultimately Baba responded and came and stood before her.

"Why are you so sorrowful? Why are you crying? I was always here," He said as He tenderly wiped her tears and face with His own handkerchief. Love surged through Kamal for Baba. Repeating 'Baba, my mother' she rose crying and clasped Baba in a secure clinch, tightly, so that His bones creaked under the pressure and still Kamal would not let go. Regaining her composure somewhat she gazed unflinchingly into His face. In Baba's eyes she discerned His image. She stared in wonderment, her eyes firmly fastened into place. As she scanned intently, she perceived that her own atma had merged into Baba's eyes. Her atma was within and her body

without, the whole wholly observable from Baba's eyes. In addition, she saw her body lying piece meal, each part separated and flung all over, here a foot, there her head and her hands in another place. The three animals were ripping her limb from limb. Inexplicably compassion in the form of love overflowed her heart for these three animals and she mentally made obeisance to them. At this her scattered members rejoined. She emerged from her trance-like state to discover herself alone as the three life forms and Baba had vanished. Instead, Dattatreya guru stood before her.

"Hey Maharaj, I have desired your darshan and yearned to worship you with all due rites and take charansparsh. Darshan I am blessed with but where in this jungle will I find puja requisites? I want to worship you with flowers, incense, rice grains and aarathi," said Kamal as she expressed her longing.

The notion flitted across her mind that when Datta guru (the provider of all things) was present before her then there should be no lack of anything, and so it happened. The necessary articles manifested. Happily, Kamal evidenced her gratitude and proceeded to conduct formal worship, in accordance with the prevailing norms, finishing with aarathi and finally prostrating at his feet, placing her forehead upon them.

"I will impart some spiritual wisdom, listen. Baba has explained to you on numerous occasions, but the veil of your ignorance is yet unremoved. All Gods, Ram, Krishna, Datta guru, Baba and your own guru are all one. Only now you expressed a desire to do my puja but everyday you worship Anna Maharaj and Baba. That is also my worship. Why do you discriminate and consider us different? Never desert the refuge of your sadguru's feet. Through him you will be in receipt of the darshan and grace of all Gods," He concluded, and vanished as Baba manifested.

"Baba it's getting late, and I wish to go home," stated Kamal.

"But it is not My wish to return. Therefore, you cannot go home until I am inclined to do so. We will go to Shirdi now," replied Baba.

They both mysteriously reached Shirdi within a short space of time. Seeing Shirdi Sai Baba's samadhi Kamal approached closer to offer her respects and take charansparsh. At this a disembodied voice issued from within, "Stand at a distance and take darshan. Do not touch." Kamal halted momentarily, glancing at Baba.

"Just now Datta guru Maharaj explained something to you and you have had his darshan. This is why Shirdi Baba is enjoining you thus. Now what do you wish to do," asked Baba.

"I will take sparsh and offer namaskar no matter the consequences to my body," replied Kamal boldly.

Suiting the action to the word Kamal neared the samadhi and gently placed her forehead upon it. At this a large snake came out from within and repeatedly bit her feet. Kamal fled to Baba's side. Instantly a solitary hand emerged from the samadhi.

"Go now, take sparsh and offer namaskar again!" ordered Baba. Kamal hesitantly advanced forward and grasped the hand within her own, unaccountably it vanished. Lifting the

samadhi cover, Kamal saw Shirdi Sai Baba lying inside perfectly preserved. Going in she touched his holy feet. Unexpectedly the cover slammed shut with a clang.

“It’s alright, I’ll stay here with you,” Kamal replied unconcerned.

“No, you cannot remain here. I have only just accomplished my avataric works and by staying here I am completing the remaining tasks. However, you have yet to fulfil your obligations of puja, worship, offerings, bhajans, devotions, love and guru seva and therefore you must leave,” he insisted.

Offering her namaskars Kamal reentered the world outside and placed her forehead on the feet of Sathya Sai Baba also.

“Go stand by the samadhi again. The blessings of many darshans is about to be bestowed on you,” said Baba.

“I have already had many darshans, what could be remaining?” she asked.

“Do not speak so, look at the darshans before you,” replied Baba.

Systematically she was regaled with visions of the snake which transformed into other terrible life forms, a lion, Sathya Sai Baba and finally Anna Maharaj. But in this instance Anna Maharaj was attired like Sri Krishna in a pitamber, a golden crown with the flute resting in his hands. Adopting Sri Krishna’s traditional pose, one foot resting enchantingly on the other he played expertly on the flute. Submerged and enraptured by the vision, drinking in the enravishing melody, over half an hour fleetingly fled by. When the vision vanished, she joyfully, merrily laughing, tripped over to Baba and taking His hand gazed at Him lovingly.

“Why? Only now you insisted that you had already had all these darshans before so where is the need for all this joy,” He said.

As their eyes met they both burst out laughing gleefully. And so finally they sat upon the snake’s hood and commenced their journey home. The shushing as it zig zagged along and its breath sounded remarkably like a railway engine. On disembarking at home Kamal bowed in obeisance, upon which both Baba and the snake vanished, and Kamal entered her home.

5th October 1978

Baba made His appearance at eleven thirty at night. Kamal was well prepared with her questions. “Baba why did You abandon me part way that day and why did You show me such frightening visions? Centuries ago, Bhagawan Pandurang also distressed and made Janabai suffer in a similar manner. Initially, he lovingly assisted by helping to grind the flour but on departing he left an article of clothing so that she was apprehended and imprisoned for the crime of theft. She endured this torture to the point of almost being hanged. Ultimately, he came and saved her. You are always doing this, cease this please. Whatever You wish to teach me, do so, but why do You torment me so? Why do You scare me so?” she asked.

“Man is constantly confounded by sufferings and in the same way he is also discomposed by extreme happiness. I have seen your strength to bear immense joy. But whether you possess the strength to bear distressing affliction or not remains to be seen. That was your test and there will always be such examinations,” replied Baba.

“Baba I firmly believe that whatever good or bad actions performed by these hands are all accomplished through the impetus of Your will. Everything occurs on Your authorisation. Nothing is mine. The good and the bad are both Yours,” said Kamal philosophically.

“That is quite correct. Nevertheless, mans habitual thought patterns and attitudes are not so easily discarded. When fortune smiles and good things happen, it appears ‘I accomplished it. It happened because of me’. Yet when an unfortunate incident occurs then it appears ‘It happened by Baba’s will’. Then man blames God for his misfortune ‘Bhagawan what is this You have done?’ Does it not ever seem so to you,” asked Baba.

“Baba if ever pride arises, that also is initiated by Your will,” countered Kamal.

“That is absolutely right. However, if you truly developed ego I would not remain here with you for even a second. Those who are devoted to Me and those who are devoted to their own gurus are both equally dear to Me. At times I elevate the one or the other. And this I do solely so that neither, no one may assume himself to be superior. Always maintaining a humble attitude one should pray for devotion and wisdom. Continuously surmising oneself ‘I am lesser’ than other devotees, one should engage in deeper devotions thereby establishing a greater love for God. You are aware, are you not, what Tukaram Maharaj wrote in his abhang katha:

Lahanpan dega deva

Lord always keep me small.

Devotees should never entertain envy,” concluded Baba.

Kamal placed her head upon Baba’s feet. “Baba always keep me small. I have no pretensions to be great. I am Your child, and You are my mother, my father, my everything. Had You not been what would have happened to me Baba! Your benevolence is upon me,” she said gratefully.

“Do not say that for on the one hand you consider Me your mother and father and then you state your indebtedness to Me. You consider yourself obliged for My kindnesses. What debt? It is My bounden duty, My obligation, hence My coming here. It is My task to keep My devotees on the correct path, whether they like it or not. Exactly like a mother’s duty,” replied Baba.

Baba followed this profound elucidation by executing the tandava dance and playing the flute. Then He disappeared.

CHAPTER 5

7th October 1978

Two days previously Baba had revealed a vision of Rukmani's marriage and the Ramleela to Kamal. I have omitted the narrative details here. As usual Baba manifested at two in the morning. On each occasion Kamal invariably prostrated at His feet, placing her head upon them. It is unnecessary to continually repeat this.

"Baba, formerly You told me that You would reveal information regarding my previous births. Tell me now," requested Kamal.

"Even were I to recount all of them to you, you would fail to understand their function, purpose and relationships and neither would other people. Then what would occur? People will reason, infer, hypothesise and pose questions which you will be unable to answer. Then what will happen? Your character annihilation and My slander. Their slanderous tales will have no effect on Me but you will be incapable of sustaining it. Each person will extract nuances and meanings according to his intellect and arguments will ensue. To what purpose? Let us leave well alone. Whatever I have imparted upto now is sufficient. The awareness of this knowledge or lack of it will in no way affect your devotion or disciplines," promised Baba.

"Then what was the purpose in showing me the Ramleela? I have heard that story many times and even read the Ramayana," stated Kamal.

"I desired that you should observe Hanuman's intrepid boldness, his swami bhakti, unshakable faith and his character, and praisingly extol them. Constantly remember his virtues; study and practice with the intention of acquiring them. How? According to the guru's injunction:

Ninda athva vanda aamucha svahitacha dhanda

Whether you praise or slander me, I care not.

I will not desert the path of my spiritual advancement.

Such persons never become unsteady in their duty or devotion," advised Baba.

"Why, Baba! Am I not Your unshakable devotee? From my side I try very hard but what can I do? I'm human, am I not? I attempt to practice sincerely what You teach me, even so errors are always made. You, Yourself reform these mistakes," replied Kamal.

"I am not implying that you are not My devotee. But you have not yet acquired the unwavering devotion of Hanuman nor his aspect of viewing Ram in every single entity. There is yet duality within you," replied Baba.

"Baba You constantly inform me that You and Anna Maharaj are one, that I should not discriminate between the two of You. I practice and understand that You are, in reality, one. I am fully aware that when I worship You at the same instant, I am also worshipping my sadguru. What else is there that I should comprehend? Please explain to me in detail," she requested.

“Look, when either Dattaguru, Shirdi Baba or sadguru Anna Maharaj present themselves before you, your impression is that this is Dattaguru, this Shirdi Baba and this your sadguru. Your limited comprehension comprehends only that ‘He has come’. This should not be. Your viewpoint should be expanded encompassing all deities which are to be viewed equally. Honour and respect it, making it your sadhana,” He advised.

“Baba, what You are expounding, I understand. However, explain one other point to me. On numerous occasions You have conferred darshan in the guise of an ant, a cockroach, bumble bee or a naag and in all of them I visualised You. I did not perceive or assume it to be an ant. Therefore, how and where does this error occur? This I fail to fathom so please enlighten me fully,” pleaded Kamal.

“I am not insinuating that you are totally erroneous. Had this been the case these unique darshans would never have been bestowed upon you. What My intention is, is to instruct you to stop thinking in terms of ‘This is Baba granting darshan in the form of a bumble bee, cockroach or naag’. Your principal attitude should be that they and Baba are one. This attitude and experience is to be practised with the purpose of making it unwaveringly unshakable. In all entities and life forms you should visualise God,” expounded Baba.

“Baba, I do attempt it and will continue to do so. I regret that I am failing to learn this properly. However, I am conscious of the thought that this is also in accordance with Your will. Baba, You Yourself are the bestower of intelligence. In consonance with Your will. You may instruct me and develop my progress as You wish. I am ready. Nothing is actually mine. Secreting Yourself behind the curtain You are the one who pulls the strings to make the puppets dance to Your tune,” added Kamal revealing her latent wisdom.

Baba laughed merrily, obviously enjoying Kamal’s disclosure. He patted her back lovingly, intoned a few notes on His flute and departed.

8th October 1978

Between seven and eight in the evening Kamal was diligently busy with chores in the kitchen, when suddenly a large cockroach dropped from above onto her foot. Hastily she brushed it aside continuing with her work. The incident repeated itself four times. However, when on the fifth occasion it fell into her lap, she immediately recollected Baba’s profound expositions. Gently she picked it up on her hand and scrutinised it closely. As she stared unflinchingly, she perceived that a moorthi of Baba was discernable in its place. It crossed her mind that it was essential to offer worship to Baba. At that instant He vanished. Desolate she prayed and entreated Baba to grant darshan in any form. The craving to fulfil her worship was acute and uppermost. But Baba would not come. Instead, He arrived very late that night.

“Only yesterday you were informing Me that in all these life forms you visualise and have darshan of Me. So what happened today? How did you fail to realise the truth even though the cockroach climbed on your foot four to five five times? Even though the thought ‘this may be Baba’ flickered through your mind you casually brushed it aside,” said Baba.

“Baba there are countless cockroaches in the house, and I was in a hurry to finish my work so perhaps that is why I was a trifle careless. On initially viewing the cockroach I recollected for a second but omitted to give it due consideration. It is entirely my fault, please pardon my omission,” prayed Kamal.

“If on first seeing the cockroach you had straightaway remembered Me and carried out puja it would have afforded Me immense joy. However, not until you were actually presented with a vision of Baba within the cockroach did it enter your mind. Now I do not want your puja,” replied Baba.

Kamal immediately fell at His feet, clasping them. “Baba please let me do puja now,” she entreated.

“Not now, most definitely not,” replied Baba adamantly.

Kamal wilfully proceeded to collect the necessary items for puja but Baba had, by then, disappeared. Kamal was later entertained to the music of a disembodied flute played by an invisible musician. Baba refused to appear.

9th October 1978

In conformance with His daily custom Baba put in an appearance at the usual hour. However, He sat in grim faced sober silence for approximately half an hour. Both maintained a taciturn reticence, neither offered to break the pin drop silence. Baba’s rage stemmed from the fact that Kamal had failed to recognise and conduct puja to Him in the form of the cockroach He had assumed. Kamal on the other hand was angry that even after her acceptance of her error Baba denied her forgiveness, not allowing her to do puja. Many times, Baba had revealed to her the maxim that sincere devotees must always consider themselves lowly and humble. Humility being a sign of divinity. As this injunction automatically surfaced in her mind Kamal, without delay, placed her forehead on His lovely feet. “Baba why are you so much offended?” she asked.

Baba responded with a laugh and proceeded to converse. “Accha, tell Me who played the flute yesterday evening?” He asked.

“It was either You or Anna Maharaj! There was no pratyaksh darshan and the flute was invisibly played,” replied Kamal.

“How could I come? I was angry with you,” responded Baba.

“Baba, look You Yourself are implying ‘Not Baba, Anna’ thereby insinuating a difference between the two,” replied Kamal.

“In your reply you said, ‘It was either Anna or Baba’. What call was there for you to mention both? You should have replied either Baba came, or Anna came so a difference would not have been apparent,” replied Baba.

Kamal’s intention was to further argue the point, but Baba silenced her with, “Come, we will sit for meditation under the pipal tree in your courtyard.”

As they meditated beneath the tree three stems with three leaves on each fell one at a time onto Kamal.

“Now write the name ‘Ram’ over the entire leaves and repeat it whilst doing so,” said Baba.

Kamal wrote ‘Ram’ five times on each leaf making a total of forty-five.

“On each occasion your atma visited vaikunta (heaven), swargalok (paradise) and patala (nether regions). These leaves have served their purpose and are of no use now,” said Baba, upon which He retrieved the leaves and looked up towards the branches and unbelievably the leaves miraculously flew up and rejoined their original branches.

“Now worship this tree,” said Baba.

Kamal unquestioningly carried out Baba’s instructions and was rewarded with Dattatreya Maharaj’s darshan. She formally worshipped him after which the desire to worship Baba arose. She looked behind her, but Baba had disappeared. Prostrating before Dattatreya Maharaj she put her head on his feet. On looking up she found Baba in His place. ‘I’ll do Baba’s puja now,’ she thought.

“Only a few moments ago you did My puja. I intended to reveal to you that Dattatreya Maharaj’s devotees consider him to be the supremest whereas Shirdi Baba’s devotees are convinced that he is the most imminent. Devotees should eschew these attitudes of superiority, inferiority, distinctions and jealousies. Devotees are numerous but the deities, Ram, Krishna, Dattatreya Maharaj, Devi, Baba etc are all one. It is to disclose to you the oneness of all Gods that Dattatreya Maharaj manifested when I vanished, and I manifested when he disappeared. Now circumambulate the tree,” ordered Baba.

Kamal commenced her walk around the tree when a vision of Baba revealed itself in place of the tree. However, upon her concluding her round the tree reappeared and Baba disappeared. Baba had, utilising this method, unveiled the mystery that the same Bhagawan was present in the tree and could be visualised therein. That in fact any God was resident therein and could be called upon to manifest. Baba then fulfilled His self-imposed duty of playing harmoniously on the flute under the tree and departed. Actually, He vanished into the tree.

10th October 1978

Baba arrived at two in the morning as usual. Kamal reopened the subject dear to her hear, “Baba for many days I wished to ask You this, have You as yet graced Shakutai with darshan or not?” she asked.

“I’m going! I will not remain here for even a second more,” replied Baba.

Kamal, stepping forward, fell at His feet embracing them, “You told me that if ever I raised the matter of Shakutai’s darshan then I would forfeit this darshan of Yours. It would be akin to death to me, even so it is acceptable. But please You must confer darshan on Shakutai. Until then I will not let You alone,” she vowed.

“You will not leave Me? What does that mean? To grant darshan or not is entirely dependent on My own free choice. If I so desired then you would be unable to perceive anything,

not even My face would be visible to you without My will. And to accomplish this takes no more than a second,” replied Baba.

“Baba why are You speaking thus? Can You become so enraged with me? Simply on persons repeating ‘Ram, Ram’ You deliver and award salvation to the greatest criminal, committer of the most heinous sins. No matter how bad a devotee is, on seeing his devotion You race to his rescue. It is not wilful obstinacy on account of Shakutai’s darshan, I am merely pleading for her. What can be difficult for You? I am cognisant of Your all-encompassing competency. When a devotee requests something with love, what have You not wished to bestow? What is impossible for You to do?” asked Kamal.

“You are entirely correct; it is no problem for Me at all. However, what should be done is known only to Myself. I have already explained to You that when the time arrives, she will definitely be granted darshan. But you are tenaciously determined,” replied Baba.

“But when will You grant it. At least tell me that,” implored Kamal.

“Next time you meet Shakutai she will tell you herself that she visited Puttaparthi and expressed the sole desire to see Me. Simply on looking upon Me she gains immeasurable bliss. From that alone she derives deep satisfaction and contentment. But you wilfully persist in your resolve that she be offered charansparsh. Why do you not gain felicity from wherein she attains contentment? Why do you insist that she be offered charansparsh?” He asked.

“Baba even so please fulfil this resolve of mine,” she prayed.

“There is no one so wilfully stubborn as you in My entire family of devotees. Are you aware that should anyone display any tendency of unruliness I reply in tones of rage, and they instantly become mute and agitated. My authority holds sway over them. They merge their will in Mine, therein lies their contentment. None are as perverse as you. Yes! But one point ought to be conceded, that to be undiscouraged and inflexibly, indefatigably persistent in one’s resolve is also necessary. That is wholly evident in you,” said Baba.

Kamal’s countenance fell dramatically, and she gazed at Baba with a tiny face. Baba could not remain aloof or ignore the mute plea. Tears formed in His eyes. Kamal also wept profusely. Baba gently extending His hand drew Kamal near. Like a mother takes her ignorant child lovingly close to her and affectionately comforts it, so Baba did. Embracing her, He wiped her tears. Then taking His flute He played upon it and vanished.

11th October 1978

At two o’clock in the afternoon Kamal had only just spread a sheet to lie upon for a short rest when suddenly someone called out to her in Shakutai’s voice. Rising Kamal hastily ran outside into the courtyard to ascertain who it was that was calling her. To her surprise there was no one present. No sooner had she comfortably settled down than the mysterious disembodied voice loudly called her name to attract her attention. Presuming it to have originated from the kitchen Kamal inspected that room first. To no avail, for it was empty. Thereafter she investigated the back of the house, again without success. Returning she reentered the kitchen to perceive an over large black bumble bee perched on the wall. She speculated that perhaps the bumble bee had

called out to her. Baba most definitely must have assumed this form and come. Kamal stood before it with folded hands in an attitude of prayer for approximately fifteen minutes. “Baba please call out again,” she begged.

Fifteen minutes later the bumble bee astounded Kamal by speaking in the same tone. Kamal promptly captured the bee in her hand. Without further ado it stung her. Kamal, resolving not to release it moved it to her other hand. It stung her again. But Kamal determinedly held on. She looked at her hands wondrously for they were full of vibhuti.

“Baba please grace me with Your darshan now,” she prayed, closing her eyes.

A voice issued from the disguised Baba, “It is not the time for pratyaksh darshan,” He said.

“Alright then, grant darshan in another form,” replied Kamal.

Then immediately, marvellously the forepart of the bumble bee transformed into Baba’s face but the hindpart retained its insect appearance.

“Now I wish to worship You,” said Kamal delighted by this startling revelation. Pulling forward a plank Kamal deposited the bumble bee (half bee half Baba form of the Lord) on it and placed a basket cover over it to prevent it from flying away. Having gathered together all her puja articles she removed the basket to find five marigold flowers instead of Baba’s bumble bee form. ‘Flowers are utilised in and offered to God during worship,’ she conjectured. ‘How am I to worship flowers? Perhaps the bumble bee, Baba and the flowers are one. On this supposition worship ought to be done,’ she finally decided. On her postulation of this hypothetical theory, the flowers transformed before her, into a moorthi of Sri Krishna. On conclusion of the puja Kamal decided it best to remove the moorthi to her mandir in the house. But on her gently lifting the moorthi it metamorphosed into the bumble bee again. Just to satisfy her curiosity as to Baba’s next move she enclosed it within her fist. However, when it was shortly opened, she was amazed to find it empty. Baba had, in His naturally mysterious manner, vanished. The flute programme was initiated and concluded invisibly.

12th October 1978

Baba manifested unusually late at almost four in the morning. Rousing Kamal from her slumber Baba mischievously asked, “How was yesterday’s darshan? Do you much prefer a bumble bee to a cockroach?”

“It’s no such thing. I like both forms, the cockroach and the bumble bee equally. But it did cross my mind that when a few days ago You donned the disguise of a naag and gained entrance to our home, all the family were blessed with Your darshan. Since I was away on an errand that day it was only on my return that I learned of Your presence from my son. So, I crept around behind the house and also looked upon You. Being unafraid I daringly captured the naag, it did not retaliate or bite me, merely going away when released. But yesterday the bumble bee stung me three times, why? Did I make a mistake? When my mental state is calm and collected my

reactions are different as opposed to when I am internally disturbed. When my mind alters and doubts assail me, at that time even though confronted with the suggestion that ‘This must be Baba’s form’ my attitude is one of negligence, indifference and inadvertent carelessness,” said Kamal.

“You must never conjecture and deliberate that this is good, this bad, this right or this wrong with regard to darshans. Darshan has been conferred, that is enough. Not until I wish it can anyone, anywhere see Me. No, not even in a dream. Therefore, the question of truth, untruth, right or wrong should never arise. You have to be taught something. I am obliged to give certain training to My devotees, which I do. It is enough that you understand this. Accha, now let’s go. Today I am desirous of taking you to Gangapur but unlike before we will travel beneath the road via an underground tunnel,” said Baba.

“Baba it’s now almost four o’clock and no matter how urgently we may wish to return, it cannot possibly be before five o’clock. By which time many people are awake and abroad. The hustle and bustle of daily life commences. What if someone were to see us? Perhaps You may not be visible but I most certainly will be. Then what will be the result?” asked Kamal.

“I honestly do not know when your ignorance will be dispersed. Hey, so long as I am by your side you also will not be visible to anyone. That much power I have! Now discard your apprehensions and come. Do not waste time in futile conversation,” admonished Baba.

On reaching the outskirts of the village Baba advanced towards a large flat rock which He raised to unveil an enormous tunnel, pitch black and enveloped in the deepest night, inside.

“Good gracious Baba, how dark it is. Nothing is visible. Before I go any further, I will take hold of Your hand,” said Kamal.

Kamal assuredly gripped Baba’s hand in a stranglehold. Slipping and stumbling they proceeded along the cavern. So long as Baba’s hand was securely in hers Kamal was happily unconcerned with her surroundings. But then unaccountably the thought arose ‘What if like before Baba abandons me? What will I do in this inky black cavern?’ On the formulation of this thought Baba naturally disappeared. Kamal, desolated, shivered and trembled from head to toe. Her mouth parched, dried up, sweat formed and dripped in rivulets. Her feet numb lost the power to move. Wearily she sat down. Until now at least she had the consolation of seeing Baba’s face and the relief of His hand in hers. Now in these murky benighted shadows she was all alone. That one comforting bolster was gone. Eventually, she initiated a search for Baba in the nocturnal tunnel whilst chanting His name. Although occupying herself so, her mind was still a torrent of bursting agitated tumultuousness. As she frenziedly searched, eerie spectral voices emerged from deep within the cave. The weird tones clarified as one insistently resonant voice drowned the others to formidably state, “No one has permission to enter this cavern. Who has come in?” The vibrantly harsh voice reiterated the question. Terrified, Kamal maintained a discreet silence concentrating on chanting Baba’s name. However, the bodiless entity persisted, and it struck Kamal that when Baba masqueraded as a cockroach, bumble bee, naag etc conversation had been possible. Therefore, perhaps this could be Baba’s voice also. As the logic of this solution penetrated, her dread and fear faded away like so much morning mist on meeting the rays of the

sun. Kamal loudly and clearly shouted “Baba, Baba! I came here accompanied by Baba and so I have a right to be here. Whoever is asking this question reveal yourself by coming here before me,” shouted Kamal courageously.

At her command a form emerged from the surrounding obscure gloominess. It advanced towards her. On closer inspection it became apparent that it was human but with eyes akin to burning coal fires. Rage evidently writ on his face. He was clothed in a simple dhoti and carried a bow and arrows in his hand. Prepared to loosen an arrow any moment he raced towards Kamal. As he approached, Kamal discerned his features. She was absolutely positive that this was none other than the famed hero Parasurama. Since he was nearing ready to strike Kamal thought, ‘Could it be that he was coming to protect her?’ Deliberately relinquishing all superfluous rationalism, she contemplated upon and chanted Baba’s name even more ardently. As he reached her Kamal bowing fell at his feet, clasping them in a tightly held embrace, placing her forehead upon them. She pleaded with Baba to appear, but without success. Kamal proceeded to entreat Baba aloud, “Baba, Baba why do You always desert and leave me in these desperate situations? Today You promised ‘I’ll not leave you’ and still You have gone. How many times will You continue to test me like this? Why do You torment me so? I know that when I suffer You do also. Then why do You act thus? Baba, please come quickly, Baba, Baba,” she begged.

“What’s this Baba, Baba? My name is Parasurama,” he said, his already fermenting rage visibly escalating.

But Kamal adhered studiously to his feet, not even lifting her head. “For me Baba is Parasurama and Parsurama is Baba,” she replied.

It had no effect in cooling his temper. “With this arrow I’ll take your life this instant. If you wish to save your life then refrain from repeating Baba, Baba,” he ordered.

“You may take my life if it is your will for, I will continue saying Baba, Baba. In fact, I will refer to you as Baba too,” replied Kamal defiantly.

On hearing this challenge Parasurama, quick as lightening, shot an arrow at Kamal and her physical body collapsed in a heap at his feet. But her immortal, imperishable atma abided in that particular space, endowed with the full faculties of hearing, seeing and speaking.

“Baba how could my execution take place when You were protecting and guarding me? But more amazing is how can I continue to converse despite my murder? How am I witnessing all this?” she asked, mystified.

“I’ll destroy this entity which is yet capable of speech and sight,” threatened Parasurama.

“How will You do that? This is the eternal atma therefore it cannot die. Then in reality You and I are one,” said Kamal wisely.

As this theory was expounded, at Parasurama’s directive, Kamal’s atma reentered her body which instantly returned to life. Parasuramaji, calming down, lovingly asked Kamal, “Why and how have you come here? Who did you come with? Where do you intend to go now? Tell me, I’ll escort you there.”

“Why are you asking me these questions? Whatever has taken place until now you have carried out. Are you hoping to pose confusing dilemmas by asking me these questions? My soul, the core of my being, is plainly visible to you. Baba, I do not want to go anywhere please take me home this instant,” Kamal said.

At this Baba apparently manifested in Parasurama’s place though still supporting the bow and arrows. “Accha, now we’ll go to Gangapur,” said Baba.

“No, I do not wish to go anywhere else now. Baba be merciful and take me home,” petitioned Kamal.

Baba disagreed and taking Kamal’s hand they, both commenced their journey to Gangapur. Every five to ten minutes Baba would momentarily release Kamal’s hand. Agitated, Kamal’s gaze automatically turned towards Baba where she perceived Parasurama. But on grasping Baba’s hand Baba was discernable instead. This transformation and lightening glimpses of the two interchanging forms continued for some time. Ultimately only Baba was perceptible.

“Now we’ll stand here peacefully for five to ten minutes,” said Baba releasing Kamal’s hand.

At the termination of the allotted time Baba instantaneously disappeared. Dismayed, Kamal sat down nervously and began singing Namadev Baba’s abhang at the top of her voice.

Khya maza aata pahato si aant, yehe ba dhabat devraya
Bhagawan why are you tormenting me?
Come running and save me.

The complete abhang consists of eight to ten stanzas which Kamal sang in a raised tone. Kamal derived immense joy and comfort from chanting the refrains. ‘Baba must be on His way to me as I have so lovingly called to Him,’ she thought. And miraculously Baba materialised. Jubilantly she fell to His feet, and resting her forehead there she once again recited the abhang resonantly, weeping as she sang. Not out of fear or anger but rather exultation and rapturous devotion did the tears sparkle like dew drops. The notion impinged upon her mind that her weeping may distress Baba, whereupon she ceased and raised her head to look at the object of her devotion. Gaily laughing she wiped her tears.

“Baba, how can we go to Gangapur now? It must be well past five now. We’ll go home instead. Baba why do You constantly test me like this? Does this mean that I am committing an error at some point? Every time You promise ‘I’ll not leave you’ then You do, frightening me. What does this mean?” she queried.

“After today, I’ll not leave you again,” reiterated Baba.

“Baba, please do not speak so again. I am making mistakes, and my patience and fortitude are near to breaking point but I am aware that until I pass this particular test You will re-examine me again and again. You are doing all this for the sake of my personal spiritual progress therefore

I'll not argue the point. However, I have no wish to travel to Gangapur now, but if it is Your desire to do so, then let us go," she said resigning herself.

"Why are you so dejected? Accha, close your eyes," He requested.

"Enough! That's it, now You'll abandon me again. Fine, whatever is to be, let it be," she replied. Kamal closed her eyes.

Shortly Baba shook her. "Open your eyes," He ordered.

Kamal realised, on viewing the scene, that they had arrived at Dattatreya's mandir. Baba promptly materialised a tray with puja requisites and they both ritually performed puja to Dattatreya Maharaj.

"I'll go outside while you take charansparsh of Datta Maharaj's feet. Datta Maharaj blessed her by touching her on the head. "Baba did not torment you on your way here like before, did He?" he asked solicitously.

"The one who torments me and the one asking this question are one and the same therefore refrain from posing questions which create this dilemma for me," she replied.

Datta Maharaj lightly laughed as he said, "Bravo! That reply of yours is perfectly exact. Look, dawn is rising. You must be in a hurry to return home."

"Absolutely true. We must hurry. What I mean is that we should reach home quickly. Walking will consume undue time," she said.

Datta Maharaj extracted vibhuti from his bag and offered it to Kamal. "Here, both of you apply a little vibhuti to your foreheads and facing in the direction you desire to travel in, throw some before you," he enjoined.

Outside, Kamal informed Baba of all that had happened. Obeying Datta Maharaj's injunction they arrived home in a twinkling, and executing the murali melody Baba departed.

13th October 1978

Baba made an appearance at the earlier time of twelve o'clock. Contrary to expectation, even at this late hour, all had not yet been served supper. Nevertheless, Kamal was lying down taking a nap, lightly dozing, when Baba briskly awoke her.

"How are you managing without eating today?" He asked. "Come, you are starved, and I am hungry. We will go and eat," He suggested.

'How can Baba eat the simple food available in my house? All I have to offer are wheat chappattis and potato curry. Ah yes, however, Baba can easily materialise and give me any dish at any time fitting for Him to eat. Baba is quite competent to give me whatever I may ask for. But it is not conventional or correct to serve Baba something originally requested from Him. Will Baba eat the poor offerings from my house? Today the opportunity has arisen, so let's see,' she thought.

“Here am I saying I’m hungry and all you do is stand and think,” complained Baba.

Kamal confided her deliberations to Baba in their entirety.

“I see! What I materialise is Baba’s yet the chappattis and curry cooked in your house, is it yours? All this,” He gestured, “is yours and what I create and give you is Mine? Are your conclusions accurate? The provider of all this chappatti and curry is also Me, is it not? Or does someone else provide it?” He questioned.

Cognising her misconception, Kamal dropped at Baba’s feet craving His grace.

“Baba what can I do? I am wholly ignorant. Pardon me please. I’ve only just realised the enormous extent of my delusion. It’s a mystery how these thoughts arise in the mind. Pray excuse me,” she begged.

Baba, indulgent as ever, exonerated her. They then partook of a meal from the same tray like near and dear friends, after which Baba left. The flute was harmoniously and invisibly played.

14th October 1978

Baba manifested at two o’clock as usual. “Will You eat something today?” asked Kamal hopefully.

“No,” refused Baba. “Today I’m hoping to take you some place. I intend to show you Dronagiri mountain,” He explained.

“No Baba. Till today You have taken me to many places and shown me various sights. Which others will You show me? It is my belief that the supreme God is standing before me in Your present form. Therefore what ‘sight’ remains to be seen,” she asked.

“Artfully cunning, are you not? I am aware that whenever I take you out you are subjected to immense distress hence your refusal, is it not? Notwithstanding, it is My wish, and I will certainly take you to Dronagiri,” He insisted.

“I am not declining on account of the hardship Baba, but due to my equilibrium being disrupted. Whatever suffering You wish to impose, do so here itself. I am ready. I have no wish to go outside,” replied Kamal.

“I have never come across so wilfully obstinate a girl before. I am going! I’ll not remain here a second more,” retorted Baba as He rose to leave.

Apprehensive, Kamal instantly clasped His feet. “Take me wherever You wish, I’m prepared to go. Only please fulfil my request, do not desert me at all. We will leave together travel together and return together. Please accept this condition of mine,” she insisted.

“Accha,” replied Baba.

“On many occasions You say thus and yet You abandon me midway. Therefore, I have no faith in Your words,” complained Kamal.

“Accha, then you see what happens today,” He advised.

Setting off, they soon reached the boundaries of the village and as previously described, the path was rough, strewn with stones, nettles, ditches and potholes etc. The cloak of darkness enveloped them as their sandals creaked and cracked amidst the gravel. Heavy thickets encircled them as they traversed this weird wild area.

“For the fulfilment of His duties, God is sometimes forced to lie a little,” explained Baba. No sooner did He complete the sentence than He abruptly vanished.

Scared out of her wits, her legs refusing to cooperate, Kamal sat down in the middle of the road. ‘The way forward is unknown, the path traversed is pitch black and nothing is visible. What am I to do?’ she debated. Kamal eventually decided it prudent to retrace her steps homeward than continue to advance into unknown territory. So girding up her courage, she stood up. Her imagination boggled in startled surprise as the route travelled was now an unknown quantity. Mountainous regions furnished with immensely structured forests met her view. Immediately in front she was confronted by a colossal mountain. Kamal commenced climbing while consoling herself, ‘I’ll continue climbing upwards, at some stage I’m bound to attain the summit. If not, when dawn breaks, I’ll seek directions and return home.’ But what actually happened was wondrously astonishing for within two minutes Kamal reached the crest of the peak. Kamal had not dreamed of this contingency. From her vantage Kamal espied a mandir with a man seated therein, who in ringing tones recited abhangs. Kamal drew close and sat down to listen.

Dar hindate aakash tiche chit pilapashi
An eagle flies high in the sky yet her attention
is concentrated on her children.

Whilst intoning the abhang he appeared as if fast receding into the distance, gradually diminishing, becoming smaller and smaller finally vanishing from view totally. Although his sonorously ringing voice continued unabated.

‘Far better than sitting idly here, I would be wiser to swiftly follow that aged person to gain directions for home,’ she concluded hopefully. She intuitively trailed the voice for some fifteen to twenty minutes when it abruptly ceased, leaving poor Kamal confounded as nothing was to be seen or heard. Nevertheless, valiantly mustering her courage she walked for a further ten to fifteen minutes. Suddenly an anonymous entity grasped her feet. Kamal screamed in protest, “Who are you? Who has taken hold of my feet?” she yelled as she desperately tried to pull them free. Receiving no response Kamal tugged with all her strength. Fortunately, they yielded but her victory was short lived as now her hands were captured over her head and stretched interminably as she hung like a leaf in the breeze. Swinging aloft in mid air, her feet barely above the ground, it was virtually impossible to move her hands to initiate an escape. Swaying in the wind Kamal was a victim to spasms of twinging pain agonisingly shooting through her frame. Screaming her anguish she shrieked with all her might, “Baba, Baba, come! Where are You? This time You’ll have to come,” she moaned in affliction. “No matter what, come here this very second Baba.” As she cried for help another pair of unknown hands clasped her feet as well. Baba had not obliged but now a strange voice issued from close by.

“The one who is holding your feet and hands is me, a demon. I perceive you as a true, faithful devotee and therefore my yearning is to place my forehead upon your feet. But you drew your feet away screaming in anger and fear. So, I released your feet and captured your hands and now I’ve got both your feet and hands. Therefore, do not be afraid and willingly consent to my touching your feet and I’ll let you go,” promised the demon.

“Whatever you are, do not touch my feet,” retaliated Kamal. “You should take charansparsh of Baba because He is God. To forcefully touch my feet cannot be accounted true charansparsh. It will not benefit you in the least. You may do as you please, whether letting me go or continue holding me, but I have no intention of offering you my feet to touch,” retorted Kamal.

“What you are saying is beyond my comprehension. My belief is that a sincere and pure devotee lives under the impression that ‘God is ever present’. Not only this, but there is no distance or distinction between God and devotee. Until he attains this stage, he cannot be considered a true devotee at all. You are a true devotee of God and therefore when I have darshan of you it will be darshan of God also. When Baba comes, I’ll certainly have His darshan as well and receive His blessings,” replied the remarkably wise demon.

“You are promising to release me if I willingly consent to your taking charansparsh, is it not? But where will I go then? I do not know the way and so I cannot go anywhere in the dark so its pointless for you to jerk and tug at my hands and feet. It is far better that in this situation I chant God’s name and if my life is lost in this condition, I will feel no sorrow or regret,” said Kamal.

“Look, I’ve already got hold of your hands and feet, so why don’t you agree happily to my wish otherwise you will probably lose your life in the ensuing wrenching and pulling,” advised the demon.

Kamal requested a temporary reprieve for ten to fifteen minutes to review the situation. The question for debate was ‘Would it be wiser to grant charansparsh or die?’ She eventually concluded that to happily assent to the former implied that she was afraid of dying. Therefore, she proposed, “I will willingly offer charansparsh and darshan upon one condition; that after darshan you must kill me. I have no desire to live now. I’ll fulfil your wish if you will fulfil mine. Is that acceptable?” she asked.

“My wish has now been fulfilled but you cannot die at my hands. However, since you have assented to my desire, I am duty bound to accede to yours,” he responded.

Upon which an utterly hideously grotesque body materialised to accompany the voice. Kamal was cowed into terrified panic. This was far worse than dying. She vented her rage on Baba. “Every time You promise not to leave but then You invariably disappear, deserting me,” she wailed. She snapped shut her eyes to spare herself the vile view, but the lurid features persisted, and her fear was unabated. “Baba why do You forsake me? Always frightening me so. I am summoning You and still You are not coming. After this I’ll never call You again,” she declared omniously. True to her word she began shouting “Anna, Anna” instead of Baba. Within

five minutes Anna Maharaj manifested as the demon vanished. Gratified, Kamal rejoicingly ran to him, embracing him, delightedly laughing. She stared at him calmly unmoving, restored to tranquillity. Anna Maharaj affectionately patted her head.

“What dire trouble assailed you that you shouted for me so desperately?” he asked.

With the purpose of pointing out the terrifying spectacle of the demon and illustrating the suffering to which she had been subjected she looked around, blinked unbelievably, for a vacant vacuum met her astonished gaze. However, she recapitulated the recent episode quite graphically, “He caused me so much suffering. He captured my hands above and my feet below, tugging and pulling. My whole body was racked by pain. Even now it aches. He stretched my hands and feet indescribably sorely. Baba abandons me in such awful moments. I concentrated on and called Him, but Baba did not come,” she said concluding her narration.

“Why were you so stubborn? Why didn’t you offer charansparsh to the demon? As you denied charansparsh then I too deny you my darshan,” replied Anna Maharaj.

Hearing this unpalatable threat Kamal instantly caught her guru’s feet weeping but they disappeared from her hold. Woefully harrowed, she pathetically wept noisily, her heart-rending sobs echoing around. Her parched throat resembled a desert as her breath seized as if in its final throes. Her aching frame grinded to a halt. She called, begged and pleaded for Anna Maharaj to return, to no avail. Having reached her limit, soon, in an improved state she vowed, ‘Anna I promise that if the demon appears now, I’ll not be wilful. I will willingly offer my feet for him to touch. I’ll also touch his feet. Now if only he’d return,’ she thought aloud. Five minutes later a voice was heard and soon an even more abominably loathsome demon appeared and stood before her.

“Pray absolve me, I was extremely obstinate. The fault is entirely mine. I’ll first touch your feet because on your disappearance Anna Maharaj manifested and now on his disappearance you have returned. This means that you are the supremest of Gods. Hence it is me who should touch your feet. Why should you take charansparsh of my feet?” she queried.

“If God is present in me is he not present in you too? Even now you are being confused,” replied the demon. He advanced forward clasping her feet and rested his forehead upon them. Kamal stared shocked at the speed with which this action had taken place. Still, she attempted to forcibly free her feet. As she watched stunned the demon’s frame changed into Baba’s idol. Baba Himself was holding her feet. Deeply galled, intolerably mortified by what she assumed to be unnatural and blasphemous, Kamal wailed and screamed her disapproval in no uncertain terms. “Baba what are You doing?” she asked. “Why do You torture me so? How does this enhance Your standing and glory that You have placed Your head on my feet? Why are You making me a party to a sacrilege? Baba I cannot bear to witness this sight. Please kill me. Please raise Your head for I yearn to look upon Your face. Let go my feet. Baba You are God, and I am a devotee. How can You forget this? This act of Yours is grievously wrong,” she beseeched distractedly.

However, Baba did not release Kamal's feet nor lift His head as He replied, "Now, how can God and devotee be separate? The devotee has become God and God has become the devotee."

"Baba perhaps it feels so to You but until my understanding and feelings are so please refrain from doing these things. It is difficult for me to sustain the consequences of them," she countered.

Yet Baba remained immobile denying Kamal the sight of His face. Kamal losing all control of her mental faculties screeched and wailed like a mad woman. Her mind almost became unhinged as she screamed as loud as she could, unable to protest with speech. Instantly Baba quickly rose and firmly held her as He tenderly massaged her back. In thus attempting to quieten Kamal Baba Himself shed tears. On seeing Baba's tears being shed on her account, seeing Him also afflicted, Kamal summoned all her control. Calming herself she asked, like the innocent child she was, "Baba why are You crying?"

"All that I am carrying out must be done and I will do it, but it causes you cruel agony and suffering and witnessing this it appears to Me as if I am slaughtering and sacrificing My own child. Hence My sorrow, which is why I am crying," replied Baba.

"Baba it's no such thing. The one who gives suffering is You and the one who overcomes it is also You. The one who gives pain is You and the one who confers the strength to bear with it is You too. Who am I? I am not apart from You. I have no real existence at all," said Kamal in an effort to console Baba.

Listening to these words of wisdom, Baba was gratified and showed His appreciation by saying "Very good, bravo!" and joyfully patted her back. "Now look at what you are saying," said Baba immensely pleased. "If I do not name them the 'Words of God' what else am I to call them? That is why I said that the devotee becomes God and God the devotee. There is no difference between the two, they are both one. I have distressed you very much up till now, in future I will not do so," He promised.

"Baba, I have no complaints, for the courage to bear it is granted by You, is it not? Torment me, torturously plague me, I will merrily bear it all. Since You are present to deliver me why should I feel fear or suffering? I will happily endure it all," she replied.

"Accha, now we'll go to Gangapur. You close your eyes," He requested.

Within five to ten minutes, they both reached Gangapur and Baba immediately materialised a puja tray. They both did puja.

"Baba it is incumbent upon me, a mortal, to do worship but why are You doing it?" she asked.

"I am not doing it for My own benefit but actually to reveal to you how it should be properly conducted," replied Baba. "Nearby there is a pipal tree; we will worship it."

As they concluded their worship of the tree Datta Maharaj manifested. Kamal duly worshipped him and took charansparsh. Datta Maharaj inquired as to her purpose in coming,

replying in return, “Tomorrow night I’ll come at eleven o’clock.” Kamal, thoroughly exhausted by her ordeal, desired to return home whereupon Datta Maharaj obligingly offered, “Both of you place your feet upon this fig leaf.”

They both complied with the instructions exactly. Closing their eyes, they were home within moments. It was four o’clock by now, so Baba promptly played on the murali and vanished.

CHAPTER 6

Kamal's Experiences On The Hospital Campus

Episode 1

As Kamal's husband's operation was scheduled to be performed at Sangali hospital, Kamal temporarily resided on the hospital campus to see to his welfare, as this is the prevailing custom in Indian hospitals. One day, Baba materialised at the unusually early hour of four in the afternoon, as Kamal lay musing alone beneath a tree within the hospital grounds.

"I am about to unveil a miracle for you to see. Look this way, in the hollow of the tree. Which idol is visible?" asked Baba.

Kamal turned around to see an idol of Sri Krishna but the blazing effulgent glare surrounding it was blindingly acute. Kamal openly displayed her amazement at the fact that thousands of people were coming and going and yet, why did they fail to see the radiance or the idol? Squinting, Kamal gazed again to discover that Radha and Sri Krishna were seated with Udhava sitting opposite them. Sri Krishna appeared to be imparting some information, but Kamal was unable to distinguish the gist, it being virtually inaudible. Kamal's surmise arose from viewing the motions of his lips and neck. Overcome by an intense desire to hear his words she pleaded. "Please let your grace descend upon me that I may hear whatever you are speaking. To view you in this garishly brilliant light pains my eyes. Therefore, either reduce the glare or pray vanish now, but bless me with your darshan tonight and let me hear your discourse." The scene promptly disappeared.

"Baba please tell me what those three were discussing," she asked.

"Here, now present there are only the two of us. Those three were saying exactly what we two are now saying," replied Baba confusingly.

"Just now I saw those three with my own eyes and their lips moving and now You are insisting that there was no one else here!" she said visibly irritated. "You are speaking lies! Do You expect me to believe what you say?" she asked in disbelief.

"Accha, then I'll return tonight and reveal everything to you?" promised Baba.

Kamal was totally preoccupied with the matter until ten thirty that night, at which time Baba arrived. "Sri Krishna was informing Udhava that this devotee (referring to you) was exactly like him (Udhava)," said Baba without preamble.

"It is my wish that those three idols be visible now," said Kamal.

“The splendour and radiance of the idols will be multiplied at night, and it is impossible for you to endure such intense luminosity. Remember the difficulty and pain you experienced in the sunlight,” Baba reminded her.

“Since You are here with me, what have I to fear? I do not care even if my eyes suffer, only I pray to You to show me the vision again,” she begged.

“First we will sit silently in meditation for a few minutes,” replied Baba.

On concentrating, the three idols reappeared before them. However, the starkly electrifying flare bedazzled her, and it became impossible for her to sustain her gaze for prolonged periods despite her hankering to do so. Darkness spread before her sight and gradually enveloped her as her head swam in circles inducing vertigo and faints. Water streamed as tears chased each other down her cheeks. But Kamal, unconscious of the limits of her mortal physical frame, unflinchingly drank in the divine visionary effulgence before her for almost an hour. Until ultimately, her mental processes unable to endure the strain, she collapsed and fell unconscious. Even in this state and unmindful of her condition her eyes remained open, drawn, attracted and attached to the scene, though unaware of it. Baba lovingly swept His hand over her head, slapping her a few times to bring her around. Kamal regained her senses, overjoyed to realise that the brilliance of the idols had diminished, and they were now viewable. Rising Kamal prostrated at Sri Krishna’s feet. “Hey Krishna, Baba says that all Gods are one, tell me is this true?” she asked.

“Hey pagali, what Baba says is exactly what I say. There is no difference between Baba and myself. Your doubts are still not quashed?” he asked.

“On seeing your apparel, your clothes, this pitamber, jewels, flute and crown one is confirmed in the truth that you are a form of God. But this is not so with regard to Baba’s attire, hair and colour. Even Baba’s clothes conform to today’s standards and so He does not appear to be a form of God. I pray to you to remove my disbelief. Tell me the truth, is Baba really God?” she asked earnestly.

“Since you affirm that I appear to you as God then you are bound to believe my words, is it not? Now I am commanding you to disperse these misconceived notions in your mind. Fling them afar, for I declare that Baba and myself are both one form. There is no difference between us. Must I always remain clothed in the clothes and guise I donned in my previous avatar? Baba explained all this to you, did He not? Had I come in the form of the four-armed Vishnu, with his dress and jewellery into today’s modern world and wandered amongst you people, you would have exhibited me in a museum hall or locked me in solitary confinement. If you sincerely believe me to be God then trust in my words, extinguish the doubts in your mind. Establish firm faith in what I say, there is absolutely no difference between Baba and myself; we are both one,” replied Sri Krishna with conviction.

On hearing this elaborate elucidation Kamal promised, “Hey Bhagawan, You are the bestower of intelligence upon me. I will believe whatever you say to me.” Kamal then ritually

worshipped Sri Krishna, Baba and Udhava, on the conclusion of which she said, "Please come always to me, alone."

Sri Krishna laughed merrily, and the entire scene vanished.

Episode 2

Still within the hospital precincts, Baba arrived one night at approximately nine thirty. Kamal was en route to her sleeping quarters when she encountered Baba on the verandah. "You are not to stop me now for my brother-in-law has already gone on ahead and the others are probably awaiting me in the room. Please come back at ten thirty or eleven either here or in the room," said Kamal quickly.

"For the past ten days I have been actively engaged in rushing about for the protection of My devotees and I have not received anything to eat. I'm famished, give Me food," replied Baba, looking the picture of starvation.

"Where can I bring food from at this time?" asked Kamal but going to her room she returned with a single banana. "This is all there is, eat it and go," said Kamal as she offered the banana.

Impatiently disposing of the banana Baba initiated a superb drama, acting as if His hunger was yet unappeased and He was suffering from acute pangs, making Him weak and fallible. Ultimately, Baba dramatically fell unconscious to the ground. Hysterically distraught Kamal attempted to waken Baba by calling out and chaffing His hands and feet. Utterly flustered, she placed her hand under Baba's nose to ascertain His breathing, her confusion turned to infectious grief as there were no signs of breathing at all. The body lay motionless, still as a corpse. Wailing piteously Kamal cried aloud, "Oh, dear, gracious, why didn't I give Him something to eat?" She berated herself penitently, whilst beseeching Baba with thousands of entreaties. But Baba, ostensibly deaf to her pleadings, lay quiet as the grave. Finally, Kamal deliberated, 'How much longer can I sit here? I'll go to my room and feigning sleep; I'll return here when the others are asleep.' However, when she came back after a short time Baba had disappeared and was nowhere to be found.

'Ohh, how wicked I am? How could I leave Baba here? What will happen now? Now Baba will never come to see me again! I refused to give Him food, letting Him starve to death,' she cried inconsolably. Sobbing unrestrainedly her body quivered and trembled as dire qualms impinged upon her mind. 'What is the use of such a life? Baba will not come to me now. How mercilessly I dealt with Him! I no longer need this body; I'll renounce it immediately. There must be poison available in this hospital or else I can burn myself to death,' she thought. Rising wearily on her mission of self annihilation, she went outside seeking here and there. Close by a set of public conveniences she discovered lots of old papers, empty cardboard boxes and wood shavings. Kamal swiftly amassed a quantity and locating a suitable corner piled them into a heap. Then fetching a box of matches, surrounding herself with the hoard of combustibles, she set them

alight. The cardboard and papers were soon a blazing bonfire, crackling and hissing as the flames licked at Kamal.

Instantaneously Baba manifested at the centre of the conflagration and the fire evaporated like magic, as if nothing had ever occurred. Baba captured Kamal's hand drawing her into His open arms with, "Kamal what necessity was there to be so zealously repentant? Why did you torture yourself for My sake? Look it would be far better if you dispense with My company altogether," advised Baba.

Enraged, irritated and appallingly aggravated Kamal responded furiously, "Since when did I chose Your society that I can now forsake it? Were someone to sacrifice his life for You even then You do not care less about him. But now I'll never let You go," replied Kamal adamantly. Kamal flung herself at Baba's feet with the purpose of holding them fast, but her hands only contacted the soft earth. Baba's feet had vanished as had Baba. Desperately distracted and pained Kamal wept. 'Baba how cruel You are? You neither let me die, grant darshan nor afford me the opportunity to beg Your pardon. It is said that You are the ocean of compassion but to me You appear heartlessly insensitive. They say Your heart is softly tender, to me it seems harsh and unyielding,' she complained. Mindless with anxiety and fear she beat her head forcefully on the ground as she said her piece and cried. Baba instantly materialised and placed His hand on her head.

"Why do you cause yourself so much suffering? Do you not remember your guru's teaching? Hey pagali, can God ever die? Does he ever undergo the agony of hunger or thirst? He is eternally hungry but only for true devotion. Only with that is he satisfied. He neither dies nor takes birth. Why! Did not Anna Maharaj explain this to you," He asked.

"Of course this is known to me. But still, why did You frighten me so?" she said asking the question uppermost in her mind.

"Until now I have many times cast you into direly stressful situations, but I have always come to your rescue and saved you at the appropriate time. After all this you have failed to realise that Baba is the omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent God! How can He die? I was only testing you, but you believed Me to be really dead," said Baba with a disarmingly sweet smile.

"Baba You are absolutely right. In this test I did not pass. I was indeed terrified You had died and left me. Now I am trying to determine how this inauspicious thought could have arisen. Why didn't I think 'Can God ever die?' But this also is Your fault. Baba why did you condition my mind so? Had You so desired You could easily have implanted these pure thoughts into my mind, cleansing my intellect. It is irrelevant that I may decide on certain actions, for without Your grace, can I accomplish them?" she retorted, deeply embarrassed at her obvious naivety.

"Yes, what you have said is completely accurate," agreed Baba.

"Baba pray bless me so that Your revelation that God is beyond birth and death is not only constantly remembered by me but is permanently implanted in my heart and soul. That my

actions be carried out in conformance with this principle and understanding,” prayed Kamal sincerely.

“Do not worry, your wish will be fulfilled,” said Baba. Baba exacted a few notes from His flute on the spot and departed. Kamal retired to her room for the night.

Episode 3

One night Baba arrived at twelve thirty. Kamal was lying down attempting to sleep, which persistently evaded her as she thought that ‘Baba would experience difficulty finding a place to sit due to the excessive congestion in the communal hall,’ disturbed her peace. As she mentally tried to find a solution to this problem, she heard Baba’s voice coming from her pillow. Kamal was astounded ‘Where could Baba be sitting?’ as there was not even a fraction of space available. On locating the direction from whence the voice had emerged she saw Baba happily seated on the middle finger of her right hand having donned the guise of a minute form. Kamal was greatly upset at this.

“Baba You are troubled so much for my sake? There is no room to sit down even,” she said despairingly.

“Look, there is no need to be unhappy. Actually, I am enjoying Myself immensely. Owing to this overcrowded situation I have been presented with the opportunity of taking on this tiny form and sitting on your hand. God never feels any suffering on account of His devotees. On the contrary, it is I who cause you tremendous trouble and sorrow on many occasions. But I never cry so why are you crying?” He asked in conclusion.

“Baba I am a devotee, and You are God. If I cry for You, it is seemly and quite acceptable but how would it look, Your crying? Good? No! It would be a matter of gross inversion. You are the provider and sustainer of the entire universe. Why should You cry?” she asked innocently.

Baba laughed joyously, “Look today I have one inclination: to bathe you beneath the tap outside! Come,” commanded Baba, the smile lingering on His lips.

“This will not be. All these sorts of labours a devotee lovingly does for God. Pray confer on me the sagacity that I bathe You instead,” retorted a charmingly confused Kamal.

“You have previously heard about the kind of duties performed by God in the homes of His devotees, have you not? It was I who bathed Janabai and dressed her hair. She never complained or refused. I assisted with her work, but she never directed Me not to do this, not to do that or ask that I grace her with this type of intelligence or that type of intelligence, make me do this or make me do that,” replied Baba. “The one who orders and runs things, is it you or Me? Also learn another thing. You say one thing and do another; Janabai never did like this. All was acceptable to her. Everything I did or said seemed suitably appropriate to her. In that lay her felicity,” He ended.

“Alright, I’ve made an error, let’s go,” said Kamal bowing to Baba’s wishes.

They both traipsed out into the night in the direction of the communal water taps. Kamal seated herself beneath a tap and Baba opened it. But due to the late hour, 12-1am in the morning, the water supply was disconnected (as is usual in India). Baba excellently enacted the drama of one sorely disappointed and sorrow stricken at having His dearest wish thwarted. "Never mind, let it go. Were I to bathe you in this freezing cold water you will probably catch a cold," He consoled Himself.

"Baba it is well known to me that producing water from the tap is no great hardship for You, for You are all powerful. However, as You wish. Alright let's go. You can come tomorrow morning at bath time," replied Kamal.

"No, now will do fine," said Baba promptly. Briskly He reopened the tap and a hail of pearls and water cascaded on Kamal. Despite the pitch dark of midnight Kamal realised they were pearls by their round and smooth surface.

"Baba, along with the water what are these pearl-like things?" she queried.

"Yes, I have bathed you in pearls and corals. Come, get up, you must be feeling cold. I'll fetch you a little hot tea to drink," He offered.

"Baba, leave it. It's becoming very late so let me return," she replied.

Baba refused to be dissuaded from His purpose and wondrously, a hot cup of tea appeared into His hand from some unknown place. Kamal gratefully drank the welcome beverage. Baba then performed on the flute and Kamal became joyfully, merrily, blissfully happy and contented. Baba departed and Kamal retraced her steps to her room for sleep.

Episode 4

One afternoon at one o'clock Kamal was, beneath a tree outside the hospital entrance with her husband's midday meal, waiting for the gates to be officially opened by the gatekeeper. Baba made His appearance just as the gates were opened, posing an insolvable dilemma for Kamal. She naturally had an eagerness to stay with Baba and was reluctant to leave Him. However, on the other hand her conscience beset her with the logical opposition that her husband was probably hungry and would be fondly awaiting his lunch. Five minutes passed as Kamal, torn between duty and love, sought a solution to resolve this situation. Helplessly she looked at Baba hoping for a suitable response. Baba maintained an aloof silence. As it was becoming late Kamal barely managed, "Baba I should go, please come tonight," she said anxiously.

Leaving on these, to her, heart rending words she entered the hospital portals and went to her husband's ward. There she commenced preliminary arrangements to serve her husband's lunch only to be confronted by a mind-boggling scene. Baba was lying blissfully asleep beneath the bed. As usual He was visible only to Kamal which occasioned her even more acute vexation and distress. It is impossible to explain the intricate nature of the internal upheaval Kamal undergoes on seeing Baba. It was an uphill struggle for her to stoically serve her husband for her

gaze repeatedly reverted to below the bed, helpless as she was to communicate even a solitary word to Baba.

‘Baba why have You come now,’ she asked mentally. ‘You undergo severe discomforts for my sake. And yet I am so placed that I cannot offer You any hospitality, serve You, or even sit and talk to You,’ she lamented.

Her mind deadened by melancholy, her throat choked involuntarily, and it became a herculean task to prevent the tears slipping from her eyes. Her heart overflowed with compassion for Baba underneath the bed. Inappropriately some five to six visitors arrived from Shetphale solely to enquire about her husband’s state of health. Seating themselves they engaged the patient in casual conversation. The situation became even more awkward for it was now incumbent upon Kamal to chitchat with the visitors, as they had travelled a fair distance out of kindness and caring. Kamal, however, found it impossible to play the part of the genial hostess. Suddenly someone introduced the topic of Baba into the general conversation and the subject began to be eloquently discussed. All Kamal could do was look at the object of the discussion, Baba. Evidencing a keenly inquisitive mind, Baba listened to the proceedings with sheer enjoyment, concentrating on every word spoken. In between Baba would jubilantly laugh making ludicrously ridiculous faces for Kamal’s edification and amusement. Now it was all well beyond her toleration, and she wept profusely. Misunderstanding the cause for her tears they all comforted her.

“Why are you worrying needlessly?” they asked. “There’s Baba is there not? He will quickly cure your husband. You are always telling us that He invariably protects and takes care of you. Why are you then worrying so?”

Mustering all her self control Kamal managed, “Yes, Baba always stays by my side and protects me,” she replied.

The visitors had thoughtfully brought a plentiful supply of biscuits and fruits for the invalid, now offering these they prepared to depart. Kamal naturally saw them off at the hospital gates. Although all the time her mind was occupied with more pressing and important matters.

All these people love Baba so much and hold such intensely devoted thoughts. However, Baba lies before them under the bed delighting in the play. Why doesn’t Baba grant them darshan? Why does He always disappoint these poor people? Why does He repeatedly confer darshan on me alone? They are all well educated and in reality, their disciplines and devotions are far superior to mine. Therefore, what is the cause of their being unable to see Baba seated before them? And I am so ill fated that I cannot point out and say ‘Look, Baba is seated there, take darshan of Him,’ she spoke to herself as she accompanied her guests off the premises.

These purely unselfish thoughts reiterated within her causing her to burst into tears once again. Naturally misconstruing the cause in accordance with their partial understanding they consoled her as best they could. With laden hearts they reluctantly departed. Kamal ran towards the hospital but on entering the room her face fell as Baba had vanished and her husband lay in

deep slumber. Kamal was even more profoundly pained at having been unable to speak with Baba or offer Him any food and drink. Though disinclined, she forced herself to consume her own lunch. Following a short rest she again arrived at the hospital with afternoon tea for her husband, to be met with the enchantingly captivating sight. Baba leisurely seated under the bed enjoying the pleasure of eating two bananas and a few biscuits which He held in His hands. Munching away enthusiastically, eating them with relish in high glee. Unfortunately, before Kamal could say anything her husband awoke and asked for his tea. And once again the opportunity to speak with Baba was wrested from her grasp for, she had to leave immediately afterwards to meet with her brother and sister-in-law who were awaiting her beneath the tree outside. Therefore, Kamal mentally enjoined Baba, 'Please continue eating whilst I go and have my tea and return. Do not leave Baba.'

Baba decided to ignore her silent plea, for He had disappeared by the time she returned. Kamal was amused to find that Baba had helped Himself to a drink of water from the jar, emptying it in fact, before leaving. She carried out some routine cleaning and sweeping, refilling the water jar for her husband and then retraced her steps to fetch the evening meal. It was well past ten thirty when she finally reached her room to retire for the night having fulfilled all her wifely duties. At exactly eleven thirty Baba manifested. Kamal had been eagerly looking forward to His arrival. However, before Kamal could open her mouth Baba began, "You call me merciless and what are you?" He asked. "When I do come, is this how you are supposed to offer hospitality? Is it right?"

"Baba have I ever done like this before? You pose these insoluble problems making it impossible for me to behave otherwise. So what can I do? You are entirely responsible for all these events, are You not?" asked Kamal as she cried imploringly.

"Alright, from today I will not even speak with you," replied Baba pretending to be deeply offended.

Kamal maintained a discreet silence, so Baba sounded a melody on the flute and duly departed.

Episode 5

Kamal deliberated upon last night's events until two o'clock that night. At times censuring herself, then again foisting the blame upon Baba and occasionally despairingly deeply sighing in frustrated disappointment. The time of Baba's arrival was momentarily seeping, slipping away, taking with it Kamal's courage and shattering her hopes leaving a mass of broken agitated rubble within. Finally at four Baba manifested, silently sitting down. Kamal's heart soared skywards in joy. At last, He had come. She debated 'What should be said?' as Baba yet appeared extremely furious.

Frightened and slightly apprehensive though she was, she concluded that Baba should open the conversation. Baba sombrely waited expectantly hoping Kamal would break the barrier of silence. Eventually He gave up and disappeared. Her optimistic aspirations demolished and

dissolved in one fell swoop she burst into sobs, crying inconsolably as she looked at the place where Baba had sat. She begged forgiveness for her errors, 'Baba only You can absolve me of my faults. Only You possess the necessary strength and courage. Only You can estimate the errors of us foolish devotees. I should have spoken. The mistake was mine. But I fail to understand why even now the notion arises in my mind that You should have broken the silence. Though I should not entertain these egoistic ideas, it is the truth. Please do not assume that I have become indifferent and heedless due to Your daily visits. No matter with whom the blame lies, I do not presume that it is always incumbent upon You to break the silence. However, today at this time I have committed the sin of this arrogant notion entering my mind. The truth is that I was so ashamed of my actions of yesterday that when You came today, I was dying of sheer embarrassment. Formerly I have been party to numerous mistakes, and You have always forgiven me, admonished me or frightened me with threats of never returning again. During those incidents my heart intuitively felt that You would definitely return, and You always did so. But today I'm very much afraid for I fear that this time You will not pardon me. Will You never grant me darshan again? Will You never even play the flute for me? What! Has my beloved Sai mother become wrathful with me? Has my mother, my father, my very life become enraged with me? Then why am I yet living? How is it possible?' thought Kamal in despair.

Speculating ruminatively Kamal's state neared one of dissolution, as assailed by palpitations she dropped unconscious to the ground. Baba refused to be moved. When she came to her senses, she attempted to collect herself reliance in an effort to continue her existence. But unlike before, when the necessary confidence and strength emerged from within, now she was totally devoid of any resolute fortitude. It seemed to have been spirited away in Baba's wake. However, do worldly transactions cease? Do they delay on anyones behalf? Inexorably the irreversible hand of time measured the seconds, minutes and hours and another day dawned. The hustle and bustle of daily stirring and striving commenced. Whispers, murmurs and resonant tones grated upon the morning stillness. Kamal stirred her reluctant hands and feet. She coaxed her numb corpse like frame into action, forcing the unwilling members to undertake their household chores. While so occupied her mind was seated before Baba prayfully, accepting her guilt, begging for pardon. This internal turmoil of forlorn contrition persisted till twelve noon when she went to the communal taps to wash her load of clothes. Reminiscing and recollecting all her former experiences she became heavy with remorse as tears flooded from her eyes, her throat arid dry and hoarse she was mentally and morally depleted. Her consternation arose from the fact that this dire calamity had converged upon her today so why was Baba still not coming? Had His maternal compassion and mercy dried up? As this succession of ponderings trailed within, she deserted her work, sitting down pensively in a brown study. Soon the general commotion around her penetrated her reflections, the machinery of her body reactivated itself and she concluded her washing. After serving her husband's lunch she exited the hospital as they closed the metal doors to their institution. Exhausted more in mind than body she lay down beneath a tree. Her mind attained the state of destitution following all the assumptions, presumptions and extensive self examination of the how's and why's. Unconcerned with the requisites of food and drink Kamal lay there as her thoughts flitted here and there like a breeze blowing through the caverns of her mind. 'From where shall I gain the strength to bear with this separation from You? Why Baba?

Are You not my mother and father? How do You become so harsh and unyielding? As yet I have not related any of these incidents to my guru. Could my guru ever be so severe? Never, so now I'll call on him. Anna Maharaj, please come and view my condition for I yearn to cry my heart out before you. Only you can diminish this heartache and pain. You are my gurumatha,' she implored.

Kamal prayed and expectantly awaited her guru but how could he come? Finally, she concluded, 'Baba is his and he is Baba's. They both belong to each other. Both are one. Baba has always imparted this lesson to me. I am the only one separate from them. Hence, what other path remains for me? Let it be as Baba wishes,' she decided ultimately.

This condition of resignation remained until seven that night when it struck Kamal that the only option left was to continuously, unceasingly, plaintively, pleadingly call out to Baba. Nothing but this she resolved. Will He not feel any compassion for me then? In addition, her duties and the work in hand was being automatically performed and before long the clock sounded ten. Kamal lay alone on her mattress immersed in thoughts of Baba. That night the hospital staff and maintenance workers were active until well past midnight. Kamal long sufferingly awaited Baba till 3.30am. 'Until today the murali has always been played either by Baba physically present or invisibly, but today even that has been dispensed with. Baba is seriously angered. Now what will become of me?' she thought.

Four interminably long days passed. This condition of Kamal's persisted without decrease, in fact the perplexing agitation and alarm deepened daily. She alternated momentarily between evidencing a devotee's anger and the childlike telling of tales. This ever changing of minds shattered her spirit completely. She became unstable and dangerously close to losing her sanity entirely. Then the miraculous occurred. Baba finally manifested at two o' clock one night. Without holding any converse, He proceeded to play the flute and concluded the melody without even yet offering any words of consolation or comfort. Kamal sat silently; her head lowered in resignation not daring to glance at Baba. Baba approached, gently lifting her face towards Himself. Taking her into His arms like a child, He embraced her, affectionately pressing His hand on her head. Still Kamal was deathly silent, neither weeping, nor speaking nor happy. But her mind reiterated, 'What is happening? I should say something. Why doesn't my anger go? Why are things happening so?' she asked herself.

"Good gracious, how wilful you are? I cannot understand this at all. Why is it that no matter how angry I am, it is Me who has to admit defeat and speak to you? How much I love you and yet you are so perverse," said Baba.

Tears chased one another as Kamal wept, "Baba even all this is Your play. What can I possibly do? You are God incarnate and yet You were enraged with me for the past five to six days. Were You not aware of my mental state? I am just an ordinary mortal. It is acceptable and unavoidable that us foolish humans commit mistakes, it's our right but not Yours. Had You been born a mortal You would understand my situation when You arrive at the most inopportune moments. A housewife's time is restricted and mostly accounted for and You come at any time of

the day. When You come, I crave to sit with You, serve You and talk with You but You purposefully arrive at a time when I am occupied. You tell me Yourself, is this correct behaviour? Even though for the past week I was bereft of all my capabilities and plunged into a morass of melancholy, Your mercy was still not aroused. How do You manage to become so inflexibly unmovable? Is it possible that a mother can behave so with her child? I consider myself Your daughter and You contrarily come at awkward moments, posing impossible problems for me and, to cap it all, You are not perceptible to other folk, otherwise my dilemma would cease to exist. Look how wise and educated they are, loving You, and devoted to You they are. But You do not grant darshan to them. What am I compared to them? The fact that You refuse to confer Your darshan on them has a deleterious effect on me. It pains me and I fear that it may adversely reflect on me, that my own devotion may lessen. Since when and how am I a devotee? Whatever happened till now is all due to the grace of my guru Anna Maharaj. He it was who distanced me from his own feet and cast me at your feet. He saved himself and instead foisted me upon You,” she claimed finally concluding her lecture.

Baba laughed merrily at Kamal’s digressions. “I really do not understand when oh when will your ignorance be removed. How many times have I explained that you leave the worry about other people to Me and look only to yourself,” advised Baba.

“Baba it seems to me that the veil of ignorance has been lifted. Nevertheless, explain one point to me. When Anna Maharaj grants darshan, he does so to all people alike. In fact, he reserves exactly the same attitude for all his disciples. Now, why do You not offer the same darshan to others as You do to me? You repeatedly inform me that You and Anna Maharaj are one, so why this difference in Your attitudes? My guru Anna Maharaj never does like this,” complained Kamal.

“The darshan that Anna Maharaj affords to his devotees everyday is also My darshan. They should be content with that. Why should there be a desire for individual darshan? However, if so, how can the equality of it be attained?” asked Baba logically.

“Baba by speaking in these confusing riddles You entangle me in a mesh of words. You tie in knots my already perplexed mind. But listen to one further point. You come to me many times and confer darshan anywhere at anytime. Well Anna Maharaj does not do this. So, what sort of equality is this?” argued Kamal.

“Well, well, you do talk a lot now. Very good. I was under the impression that only I could pose problems for you, but no! Now you have created a complication for Me also,” admitted Baba, obviously delighted at His child’s progress.

“Definitely not! What problem can I possibly pose for You?” she queried naively. “You are aware of everything only You do not disclose it. However, even this is all Your drama. But still I feel that if after Anna Maharaj’s darshan they could be granted Your darshan, how much bliss and joy they would derive. This can only be understood and felt by me. Baba why do You become so unfeeling?” she asked.

“See here, you have been fortunate enough to experience both darshans and are therefore aware of the immensely superior ecstasy obtained from My darshan, but these persons have never been blessed with My darshan and are therefore in ignorance of that particular ananda. And so, they do not unremittably, one pointedly crave My darshan. Until such time as they have tasted the nectar of God’s darshan how can they realise the sweetness of that ambrosia, of that divinity. Hence, they lack the necessary yearning for that nectar. They are quite content with Anna Maharaj’s darshan and so they must be satisfied with that darshan alone. What is to be done for whom is known only to Myself. Do not contemplate on such matters, upsetting yourself needlessly for they are beyond your comprehension, so do not raise this topic again,” ordered Baba.

Episode 6

On Thursday when everyone in the communal hall had fallen asleep, Baba arrived at nine thirty. “Kamal what is the matter with you?” He asked lovingly. “Do you know where you are? Why are you calling Me so insistently like this?” He said to a bewildered Kamal.

“No, I did not call You. I am in the hospital. Perhaps I am presently in trouble, I do not know! Even when I am in trouble, I never call You and I never will,” she replied confused.

“Then how come I hear this voice? It is yours and it is you who is calling Me,” insisted Baba

“No Baba, I’m speaking the truth, I have not called You. But today is Thursday and I am worried as to how bhajan can be conducted here and how it is faring at home. Perhaps Anna Maharaj has come home? I am not happy and am disturbed, nothing appears right to me,” she said mournfully.

“Accha, then come with Me today and I’ll introduce you to Gorakshnath,” replied Baba brightly.

“Baba, I do not want to go anywhere. I am simply homesick thinking about Shetphale my own village and my home,” replied Kamal.

“Look, the sect is a highly imminent and elevated one, I believe in him also. I desire to show you everything. That very temple, the golden mountain, guru Gorakshnath and many other things,” offered Baba invitingly.

“No, I have no wish to see anything or go anywhere,” she replied.

“If you persist in this then you will never have My darshan again. You may take this to be the final occasion,” He said.

“I do not need Your darshan. And You may hear my words also. I am Your child and when a child cries the mother is obliged to come and lift it onto her lap. When the mother becomes angry, apart from crying, what else can the child do? In reality what does the child have in its

hands? If it is the mother's wish, she will pick up the child, if not, then not! Now You may go," replied Kamal irritably.

"Accha, just give your hand into mine," said Baba mysteriously. Baba then wrote upon Kamal's hand with His finger the following sloka.

Yatra Yogeshwaram krishno yatra partho danurdharah
tatra sri virjyo bhutidhrurva nirmatirmam

A full stanza in the ancient Indian language of Sanskrit. Baba only lettered the words with His finger but unbelievably the words appeared on Kamal's hand as if written on white paper with ink, clearly and in a beautifully bold stylish script.

"Now even if you have no intention of coming with Me this sloka will bring you along," said Baba significantly.

"Is that so!" retorted Kamal. "We'll see what this sloka can do? When I am not inclined to go with You, how can it take me along?"

"Actually, if you are really concerned I'm quite hungry. First offer Me something to eat," replied Baba, tactfully changing the subject.

Kamal thought she had nothing in her possession which she could offer Baba. However, on reflection she recollected that her brother Jakate had brought her a loaf of bread, of which a portion yet remained, carefully wrapped up in paper. Kamal retrieved this now precious article of food and offered it to Baba. Baba swiftly disposed of it and then initiated the drama of being especially thirsty.

"Baba, from where can we get water at this late hour? All the doors are closed and we can neither go to the kitchen nor the tap outside," she said despondently.

"You just start towards the door. As you approach the lock will open itself, as will the door," replied Baba.

Together they advanced towards the securely locked door and behold, to Kamal's amazed astonishment, it mysteriously opened itself. Entering the kitchen Baba helped Himself to water and they both returned to their original places. On being comfortably settled Baba suggested that they meditate for a while.

"Baba how can we sit here for meditation? We require an open space for it. What if during meditation my bodily reactions are tumultuous? There are various types of persons present here, what if they were to wake?" she said. (The meditational reactions have been detailed before)

"This space is quite sufficient. You are not to concern yourself with the people. Everyone is asleep, therefore do not worry about it. I am here and no one will see anything unusual," promised Baba.

“Baba, both You and Anna Maharaj enjoin me to practise meditation whilst enjoying the spectacle at my expense,” she complained. At this Kamal suddenly remembered that the other form assumed by Baba, namely the white dog, had also accompanied Him today and had been seated there. But now it had mysteriously disappeared. Where had it vanished to? Kamal queried Baba who responded with delighted laughter.

“Dogs are very cunning and clever. They understand everything. Now you’ll see how having sought out the path it will take us directly to our destination. We will simply follow behind him. At the present moment he is with Gorakshnath informing him of our imminent arrival, after which he will return to take us there,” replied Baba.

Kamal settled down concentrating in a state of meditation. While so engaged she asked Baba, “Shakutai and other notable disciples of Anna Maharaj are famished for Your darshan. They try ardourously to attain it but when You come You are not visible to them, only to this one girl. Why?” she questioned in the third person.

“I’ll tell you the story of her actions in her previous birth. When I was resident in Shirdi as Shirdi Baba that girl was the daughter of a poor brahmin. Every day she begged for food from house to house, striving to sustain herself in this manner. One day she begged flour from Me which I willingly offered. From then onwards she came every day but only with the sole purpose of filling her empty stomach. There were numerous persons who considered Me a guru and others who had elevated Me to the position of God. But these noble notions and consequential experiences were beyond the boundary of her intellect, and such beliefs were never entertained by her. A few days hence it struck her that formerly she used to collect flour for her meals from various places, but she was never wholly satisfied, and hunger invariably remained. However, since the day she started taking flour from Me her stomach felt at once replete and full with the minimum of food. These small portions of nourishment contented her fully. Therefore, one day she related this fact to Me ‘With only a little food from you my hunger is satisfied but my brothers and sisters remain hungry. So please will You give something with which my family’s hunger can be removed without my having to come everyday to beg from you’. Initially I protested with ‘From whence can I give You such a thing? I, Myself am a fakir and I beg for food’. However, she persisted obstinately in her resolve, clinging to Me, giving Me no peace. Eventually I offered ‘Take home whatever I give you, it will prove to be sufficient for all’. She began to follow this formula assiduously. Subsequently she approached Me with the proposal ‘I wish to feed five to seven persons in charity, please do something’. I asked her to bring a vessel and fill it with water. Then I presented her with a grain of rice instructing that once the persons were seated, she was to remove the rice grain from the water and touch the trays with it. In this manner they will receive food. She followed all exactly as I had said. Now, from amongst these five to seven people one was a householder, the remainder being bramcharis. Before all of them she took the rice grain from the pot and touched their trays with it, which immediately mysteriously overflowed with food. Naturally astounded, they asked her many questions as to how this was possible. Who had given her the vessel and the rice grain? She remained quiet, refusing to reply. Eventually the householder informed her ‘I desire to arrange your marriage to my son’. The girl refused outright but the man attempted to enforce his will by forcefully

dragging her along. Helpless, she cursed me in her rage. She gave vent to words of slander which ought never to have left her lips. On the contrary, she should have pleaded prayerfully to Me. She repaid the debt of a good deed with unwarranted accusations. So, I responded with ‘Accha, your marriage will never take place but you will be obliged to beg for food from house to house. You’ll never receive food seated in comfort’. Acknowledging her error and penitently repentant she beseeched and begged for pardon. But what could I do? How could I overcome or remove the effects of My words? So, I offered her the consolation that in her next birth I will confer My darshan upon her. At that time, she will not recollect these events and subsequently in her seventh incarnation she will attain Me and remain with Me day and night. That girl is you, said Baba as He concluded His lengthy narrative. As Baba finished Kamal’s concentration automatically broke. Baba again raised the projected visit to Gorakshnath.

“So! You’ll not give up until You take me there! There is a slight problem. At night the hospital is patrolled by the police and guards. You can go but how can I go?” she asked.

“Don’t you worry about such matters. On departure we will not leave quietly but on the contrary, we will dance steps on those policemen with our feet as Sri Krishna did when he overcame the serpent Kaliya. Accha, let’s go. You go first,” He offered pleasantly.

“No, no, You lead the way first. Show me how we are to dance on them whilst we leave. If the guard awakens before we have left at least he will capture and handcuff You first and me afterwards,” Kamal replied judiciously.

“Accha, I’ll go. Tell Me, where shall I place the first foot,” asked Baba.

“On his face,” said Kamal. And to Kamal’s fascinated gaze Baba really did put both feet on the guard’s face whilst pulling Kamal along with one hand.

“Now, you go and dance all over his body,” He said.

Apprehensively Kamal carried out the command and although the guard’s hands, feet, in fact his entire frame twitched, quivered and moved about he slept as one dead.

“Wait, now we will handcuff him too,” said Baba well into the spirit of the thing now.

Having located the handcuffs, they both gleefully handcuffed the poor sleeping guard’s hands and feet. Having completed this thoroughly enjoyable task they arrived at the road and commenced their journey towards Gorakshnath. As they proceeded on their way, before long a woman became visible in the distance. Seeing her Baba informed Kamal, “You see that woman standing over there? She has been vowed this promise ‘When Baba passes by this road accompanied by another devotee, and you see them, at that time mukthi will be conferred upon you’. To this purpose she ever stands on this road.”

As they neared the old woman Kamal noticed she was so aged and emaciated as to be almost ancient, a skeleton of skin and bone. Bent double, afflicted with various ailments, her hair, nose, eyes, ears, face in fact her whole body disgustingly dirty. As soon as Baba and Kamal

approached closer, she doubled up even further to touch Baba's feet. Instantly her body took on a healthy, beautifully fresh, youthful appearance.

"Go, now reside in heaven. In that place continue to pray and yearn for attaining My presence. In My next avatar I will grant you mukthi," said Baba to the woman, before they proceeded onwards.

As they continued their journey, they met with an enormous python lying in their path, appearing as one close to death. Baba informed Kamal that it had become powerless, was hungry and lacked the necessary strength to attract or capture food for itself any longer. Baba advancing forward placed His foot in the python's mouth. Immediately it was endowed with the ability to speak.

"Hey, Lord Sainath, I have an earnest desire for Sri Ram's darshan. I pray to You to confer on me the darshan of Laxman and Sri Ram seated upon Hanuman's shoulders," he solicited. Baba compassionately blessed him with the desired boon. The python then expressed an ardour to worship Sri Ram. Like lightening Baba created a puja tray which the python gratefully accepted. He accomplished the worship with his tail. The whole affair being conducted ritually according to the prescribed disciplines and order utilising incense, kumkum and garlanding the Lord. It was surpassingly beautiful to behold. Kamal was dumbfounded, left stupified after witnessing the particularly peculiar performance of the aarthi. For he made a thin round ball of his tail and holding it like we hold niranjan, so he encircled the aarthi.

"Baba, which weighs the most, Your kafni or Hanuman's loin cloth? Pray resolve this query of mine," he prayed.

"First you tell Me, which one appears heaviest to you?" asked Baba in return.

"I believe the loin cloth is heavier because the loin cloth is of gold whilst Your kafni is made of cloth. Hence it stands to reason that the loin cloth should weigh the most," he replied.

"Alright, lift them and see," said Baba half smiling.

However, when the python lifted them, they weighed exactly the same. Subsequently Baba sent the python to its allotted place and they both recommenced their journey. Before long they were confronted by an oddly shaped mountainous rock which appeared ardourously difficult to scale. Kamal halted to think, as she did so there became visible before her a bow-like curved support which reached to the summit of the mountain.

"Now we'll take this curved support to the crest of the mountain," said Baba.

"Baba what if this jutting rock falls on us? We are both quite small in comparison. When a rock this size fell upon Ravana, he suffered from blood vomiting but managed to escape alive. That was because he was a demon, and he had immense strength. What will happen to us? We'll both die here," she decided pessimistically.

“You are a coward. Come on, nothing will happen,” replied Baba.

As soon as they attempted the climb supported by the bow, they miraculously reached the top. And there awaiting them was Gorakshnath. He had been ardently expecting Baba, but after taking charansparsh he vanished instantly.

“Baba why has Gorakshnath disappeared so quickly,” queried Kamal.

“He had been earnestly and impatiently waiting for his sadguru’s darshan. On seeing Me, he gained complete contentment hence his disappearance,” offered Baba. “And you are one who differentiates between the two,” He added.

“How could that be Baba? How could he gain the satisfaction of seeing his sadguru after Your darshan,” she asked genuinely perplexed.

“To you I am perceivable as Baba. But to him I appeared to be his sadguru. Now look, there is no one to save you so tell me truthfully, does your sadguru and Baba appear as one or not?” He asked enigmatically.

“No! Since they are two in reality how can they be perceived as one? The sadguru is sadguru and Baba is Baba. No matter what You say my sadguru is far superior. He revealed the path and so I could come to You. Only with Anna Maharaj’s darshan am I wholly satisfied. On many occasions I am graced with Your darshan in Anna Maharaj which completes my contentment. However, I do not gain a similar satisfaction from Your darshan alone. If I were forced to choose from between the two, I would invariably choose my sadguru’s darshan,” replied Kamal.

“Well at least they both appear as one to you in the respect that you gain My darshan from your sadguru’s darshan. It is for this reason you are blessed with My darshan, otherwise My darshan would be impossible. Accha, so your guru is decidedly more superior to Me? Then we will see if he comes here to save you,” said Baba as He, without further warning, threw Kamal over the mountain side.

Kamal fell like a rag doll straight down to the valley below. There Anna Maharaj picked her up in his hands and carrying her so, brought her up to the mountain top again. Baba immediately threw her over the cliff side. This play was enacted ten to eleven times after which both Baba and Anna Maharaj stood side by side. They then proposed to discover to whom Kamal was most devoted. To ascertain this two letters printed with their respective names were placed before her. Kamal was requested to select one with eyes closed. The name of the one to whom she was more devoted would be on that letter. However, Kamal was disconcerted to find both letters together. She was furious as they both laughed at her discomposure.

“Accha, now we’ll go and bathe in the river,” said Baba.

“Baba the river is very far from here in the valley below. Though it looks so pure and beautiful how can we get there?” she asked.

“We’ll do this. We will tie a rope around the waist of the bather and slowly release him below. Two people up here will firmly hold the rope. Kamal, you go first,” said Baba.

They promptly tied ropes around Kamal’s waist and cast her over the cliff. Kamal was petrified, in addition the ropes were pinching and squeezing the breath from her body making her suffocate as the total weight of her body descended on her midriff. Unable to breathe, and in extreme pain she hung down the cliff side in midair. Neither Baba nor Anna pulled her up. Ultimately, after a long time, they hauled her up. Kamal’s relief was writ plainly on her face.

“Now we will both go together,” proposed Baba.

Kamal duly tied the two ropes around their respective waists, and they proceeded down the cliff side. Kamal calmly sat holding on to the ropes. A short while later the ropes lost the impact of weight, loosening and becoming light. Kamal immediately pulled on the ropes to be met with two empty ends. On this occasion Kamal was unmoved and not at all disturbed. Kamal maintained her equanimity and poise without any anxious thoughts about their safety and that perhaps ‘They may fall down and die, or she may be left alone and what would become of her?’ Before long they were both seen jovially walking up the mountain side.

“We will walk to the mandir for darshan,” said Baba on reaching Kamal.

Subsequently Anna Maharaj disappeared. On the instant they set off from the mandir Kamal and Baba arrived within the hospital courtyard. In fact, the return journey was accomplished in a twinkling akin to the velocity of light.

“Look how your police guard is lying fast asleep. On leaving we stepped and danced all over him, but he is oblivious to it all. Now we’ll unbind him by removing the handcuffs. Kamal, a long time ago you told Anna Maharaj ‘I would like to witness the ceremony of the lingodbhava which Baba performs on Shivaratri’. Well now, look at this man,” said Baba.

As Kamal turned her gaze on him, she was poised in suspended animation at the prodigious spectacle before her. Shivlings emerged from out of the unconscious policeman’s mouth. In this unexpected and unique manner Baba fulfilled Kamal’s hankering to view the Shivaratri festival. Both proceeded towards Kamal’s bed where she lay down. Baba lulled her into slumber with soulful sounds from His flute, later departing.

Episode 7

On Monday night Baba manifested at ten thirty. As it was the evening of Kamal’s husband’s operation she was naturally under severe pressure and greatly perturbed.

“Why are you so anxious today?” He queried immediately on arrival.

Even as He asked, He affectionately patted her back and head to alleviate her distress. Kamal attained instantaneous peace and joy. All the fears, suspicions and uncertainties assailing her departed one by one without leaving behind a trace. Baba then impulsively taught her the

bhajan 'Hare Shiv Shankar, sashanka shekar, hare bham, hare bham, bham, bham bolo' with immense sentimentality. Kamal followed Baba's lead and sang with great enthusiasm, becoming so emotionally and spiritually elevated that she became oblivious to Baba, who was seated before her. Approximately half an hour passed whilst occupied in this soul stirring activity. At some point she closed her eyes in sheer ecstasy. When she reopened them, she became aware of Baba.

"Where were you a short while before," asked Baba.

"Where else? I was here before You," she replied.

Baba kept His peace. Now it was Kamal's turn for as she stared unflinchingly at Baba it appeared to her that streaks of sharp lightning strokes were flashing intermittently from the sky above and Baba was sparkling in that brilliant splendour. No! She realised that in fact the glittering radiance was emanating from Baba Himself, because lightning thunderbolts from above generally disperse after a few momentary flashes whereas Baba sparkled dazzlingly in a continuous brilliant effulgence. It was difficult to retain one's sight on the bedazzling brightness for more than a few moments as her eyes found it impossible to sustain the intensity of the luminosity. However, magnetically drawn Kamal experienced the alluring attraction of repeatedly opening her eyes to stare at this stupendous vision. How Baba was yet perceptible in that incredible blaze of divine light is unrenderable in words. Baba in the midst of this phenomenal glory appeared so ravishingly lovely, lustrously divine that the fascination was intolerably acute. Helplessly torn between two extremes, the craving to look upon Him and the inability to do so, which tugged at her heart, reduced her to tears of despair.

Later she recollected the presence of her other roommates and wondered what would be their reaction when woken by the sound of her weeping. Cognising her thoughts Baba responded with, "They are all asleep and can never awake until I wish it. You have no need to worry for they can neither hear your crying nor speaking."

As these words penetrated her understanding Kamal turned to look at Baba who was clearly visible as the resplendent glare had diminished considerably. "How wonderful it would be if my guru Anna Maharaj was perceivable now instead of Baba," said Kamal. Baba obliged by granting the desired darshan of her guru. Kamal was wrapped in ecstasy, and she declared that now her eyes were refreshingly cooled.

"The form that you saw a few moments previously is also mine," declared Anna Maharaj. "What you can see now is me but Baba is also me."

"Anna, how much botheration I constantly cause you," replied Kamal as she fell at his feet in an overflow of sentiment.

"No matter how stubborn a child is, even so the mother loves it, is it not? She lovingly seats it on her lap, and it is only on her lap that it appears happy, in its proper place and well adorned. In the same way no matter how wilful a devotee is he only appears proper and right next to the Lord. God nourishes him with an endearing, fondling love. He does not consider it a burden," said Anna Maharaj.

After elucidating this point Anna Maharaj transformed back into Baba. Kamal placed her forehead on His feet in obeisance. After harmoniously playing a melody Baba disappeared.

Episode 8

On the day following her husband's operation, namely Tuesday night, Baba came at the Sangali Hospital at eleven thirty. Kamal took charansparsh. "Baba why do You trouble Yourself and come to the hospital?" she asked. "It is all well and good for You to come at home but here, what if someone were to see You coming? Or the two of us sitting here at night talking? Should someone discover this, people will start gossiping. Furthermore, would they actually allow me to leave afterwards? For not all people are aware of You and Your true divinity," said Kamal.

"How many times have I informed you that no one can see Me until such time that it is My wish for them to do so. And no one will be able to see or hear you speaking to me thus. It is because I visit you everyday that you attach no value to My words. 'People will see' means to imply that you have no faith in Me," complained Baba.

Recognising her error Kamal fell at Baba's feet clasping them in a stranglehold, "Pardon me Baba, I am always besetting You with topsy turvy questions thereby upsetting You. I'll never say such things again," vowed Kamal.

"Accha," said Baba accepting the apology. "Come, today I'll take you to see King Janak's Mithila city."

Kamal readily agreed and they both set off. However, when they reached the village boundary she became aware of the other disguised form of Baba, namely the white dog, which regularly attended at her house. He had voluntarily joined the party.

"You are with me so how has this dog come here," asked Kamal. "On numerous occasions You don this form and come to the house. But why is it that today You are both visible together," she added.

"Why, do you only visualise Me in the form of a dog?" asked an amused Baba. "I am in everyone. God should be recognised in all life forms. You should endeavour to stabilise the belief that I am in all forms and all forms are within Me. Why is your mind constantly assailed by doubts? We will disperse these doubts tomorrow," promised Baba.

As they journeyed along they entered a vast variegated jungle infested with dense thick foliage. In their path was discerned a large flat rock like stone.

"Come, let's first look at this stone," said Baba.

They both climbed up and sat resting upon it for a space. Inexplicably a door of stone became visible. Baba, promptly opening it, glanced inside wherein was revealed a dark, deep pit. "Who will go first, you or Me?" asked Baba.

"I'll go," offered Kamal.

Baba hauled her inside and she hung in the air as Baba held her hands above. “Accha, if you wish to go, go!” He said as He released His hold.

Even though set free Kamal drifted suspended in mid air, neither up nor down for over fifteen minutes. Petrified, she screamed at the top of her voice but to no avail. Descending slowly, she began to float down like a dry leaf to whatever lay below. Desperately seeking a support of some kind, Kamal flung her arms about every which way unsuccessfully. The pit resembled a long dark vertical tunnel, seemingly endless. A midnight murkiness pervaded as Baba ominously shut the door above her. In the dingy inkiness, assailed by stark terror as she lurched, tilted and toppled deep inside. ‘What a perilous predicament? Who knows how and when this vagrant trip will end,’ she thought to herself.

The notion no sooner presented itself than she landed with a thud onto what appeared to be solid ground. At least it was preferable to swaying aimlessly in space. However, her relief was short lived, turning swiftly to horrified frustration as she realised that beneath her was not, as previously thought, earth but a pile of hot ashes. She was at a loss as to what to do, for on standing her feet were toasted and seated her body burned. So, she alternated between the only two options available to her. In these intensely unbearably intolerable circumstances two and a half hours crawled by. Her mental condition deteriorated correspondingly, as anxiety, wretchedness and vexation fretfully chafed at her ceaselessly. Perspiration and tears merged and flowed in streams of rivulets from her. As they contacted the scalding hot ashes clouds of steam arose in waves creating sharp needled burning sensations all over her body, naturally causing further perspiration. Smarting and wincing she began to call on Anna and Baba. But before long her new found wiser intellect intervened. ‘The privilege of travelling with Baba should afford blissfulness only. So why this sorrow? Baba why do You give this joy and sorrow side by side?’ she asked.

Even though faced with these unimaginably unendurable conditions Kamal had no word of complaint, anger or resentment against Baba. On the contrary she stated, ‘Baba this is also Your grace. I do not consider this to be pain and sorrow, but joy and happiness instead. On numerous occasions You have thrown me into troubles and saved me also. But today do not save me. Do not take me out of here, most definitely not. Leave me here. Whatever is to happen let it happen today,’ she told Baba with heroic resoluteness.

Such divinely orientated concepts swept through her as her lips were engaged in the ceaseless repetition of His name. ‘Baba I must have committed horrendously sinful crimes in return for which You are punishing me so direly. I am fully prepared to calmly sit here and bear it all. But Baba I know You must be suffering severely on my behalf. Even so pray do not enter this pit. I beg of You sincerely not to come in on any pretext. I could never endure that You undergo this torture on my behalf. No matter what happens to me here You are not to come in. My total, complete, supreme faith and trust is ever offered at Your lotus feet. So let anything happen to this body of mine. You are not to be concerned in the slightest. My ‘atma’ which is ‘Ram’ (Atmaram) is wholly blissful. ‘The atma cannot be burned by fire, withered by air or dissolved or wet by water,’ this is what You have said, is it not? In the same manner my atma is the eternal form of blissfulness. Your unending beneficence is upon me. I am Your devotee but please You are not to

be a shareholder in this trouble of mine. Whatever agony and suffering this body has to undergo, let it do so,' she prayed with love.

Despite being embroiled in this torturous predicament Kamal was joyfully laughing away. It is not possible to delve into and ascertain the nature of the rapturous enthrallment in which Kamal's mind was immersed in. She acknowledged and felt that though her body may be reduced to ashes her atma would attain Baba. This accounted for the beautiful delight. As these notions stabilised, flames ignited from the ashes and her body began to burn in reality. Boils and blisters emerged all over, and her eyes hollowed consumed by the raging inferno. In spite of this her vision remained perfect, unimpaired, she could see everything around her clearly. However, hers was a mortal frame, so how long could it sustain this onslaught? Afflicted and anguished it toppled onto the bed of fire. Although subject to this excruciating pain Kamal prayed, 'My Baba, do not come in here. There is a fire here, such a fire,' she repeated.

Unexpectedly as her body touched the ground it felt cool, refreshed, as a chill breeze wafted over her. Within five minutes Baba manifested. Immediately Kamal's thoughts centred around Baba's well being, 'Had He perhaps come during the former conflagration? Then He too would be hurt and like hers His body would have been burnt by the flames also'. With enormous effort she managed to open her eyes to inspect Baba's person, notwithstanding the fact that her own life was on the point of extinction. Baba gazed at Kamal with eyes overflowing with love as He restored her, passing His hand over her scarred frame, which instantly regained its former state. There remained not so much as a mark, scratch or tiny abrasure over her entire body. Her stupefied wonder knew no bounds. However, now that it was all over mental exhaustion made itself felt.

"Baba please take me home now," she said.

"No, for we have not yet seen Janak's Mithila City. No pretext will serve, you will have to come," insisted Baba.

They both left the tunnel of tribulation and proceeded on their way on foot. Without any further hazards they reached their destination. Once there, Baba showed her the exact spot from which Sita was unearthed in a golden casket. Moving on to King Janak's palace and court overflowing with royalty during the marriage of Sri Ram to Sita. Including the preceding and subsequent events of raising and breaking the sacred bow and the wedlock ceremony known as Varmala. Concluding with Ravana lying defeated on the ground at Sri Ram's feet. All this Baba recreated visually in reality for Kamal's edification. After the divine darshans Kamal walked home in Baba's company and as with all of Baba's fairytale travels, they arrived at the hospital at approximately five o'clock in the morning. Baba played a few idyllic strains on the flute before disappearing as Kamal lay down to sleep.

Episode 9

Baba manifested on Wednesday at twelve thirty in the afternoon. He observed a somnolent silence for fifteen minutes, paying no heed to Kamal's presence, not even a glance. Soon pearly

tears slipped and fell like diamonds from His eyes. Kamal's eyes expanded in surprise 'What possible reason could there be? Had she committed a grievous error?' she wondered. Consoling, sitting close by Baba whilst wiping her own and His tears she lovingly enquired, "What is the reason for this sorrow?"

"What can I say? One of My dearest devotees is seriously ill. The poor soul's condition is unbearable. But owing to you I cannot move, cannot go anywhere. Will you now grant Me permission to go, for this devotee lives very far away and it takes a great deal of time to reach there? Do not be stubborn, you remain here but let Me go. It will not be possible for Me to take you with Me on so distant an errand," replied Baba forlornly.

"Baba no matter how distant Your destination is, You can easily reach there within moments. Go and bring Your big motor car. We will travel in that and reach Your devotee very quickly. Please Baba do not refuse me. I wish to go as well. I am eagerly impatient to have darshan of this devotee of Yours," she begged.

Baba instantly fetched the car! They sped along swiftly. Kamal's happiness knew no bounds at the pleasurable thought of meeting Baba's beloved devotee. Just then someone shouted mightily "Baba, Baba, please stop," whilst racing behind the car. Suddenly the car halted. A man took his stance, by way of obstruction, in front of the car.

"Baba, I have been expectantly awaiting You for many births. You promised me that when You are enroute to confer final darshan to a devotee You will also award me darshan and effect my salvation at the same time. Just now I was hailing You and shouting at the top of my voice and still You continued on Your way without listening to me! Now I will not let You leave," he vowed.

"Look, one devotee is with Me, and I must reach the other one urgently and you stand in My way declaring 'I will not let You go!' How much running and racing around will you make Me do?" He asked in mock exasperation. "Come, you come along too," offered Baba by way of a solution to the problem. Saying which Baba seated him in the car. Amazed and overwhelmed at his good fortune, the devotee stared at Baba unblinkingly, as if his eyes were glued inseparably to Baba's enchanting face. Rapturously blissful, delirious he started to laugh uncontrollably, unable to contain the whirlpools of ecstasy in his being he displayed no intention of stopping. Baba attempted to halt his hysterics in vain. His condition was curious to behold as the face and lips contorted in the throes of inexpressible joy. Baba stopped the car and all three stood at the roadside.

"Look, see the sudden unexpected impact of My darshan? Though afforded this opportunity to see My form he is so ecstatically blissful that his mortal frame cannot sustain the rapture. I know though, that had we ignored him and left him he would have died. His thirst for darshan unquenched, his death would have been unpeaceful. But then again darshan had to be conferred no matter what circumstances or conditions resulted. That is why I seated him in the car with us. At this point I wished to explain and practically show you via this example that apart

from you My numerous devotees cannot withstand this form of Mine for more than five minutes. Their state would become thus when infused with the supreme bliss of My presence,” explained Baba at length.

Baba then revealed a vision of the Virat form which restrained the effervescent turbulence. The intoxication subsided; the man gradually attained an Arjun like composure. Baba transformed back to His present avataric form.

“My Baba, how beneficent You are? Otherwise of what account am I, that I could be deserving of Your darshan? This is Your surpassing mercy. I cannot sustain this all-enveloping overwhelming love. Baba, I pray to You to bless me with one more boon. Let death take me away whilst gazing upon this charming form of Yours. I have no desire for anything else other than to look on this form. There are no other wishes remaining. I am fully content,” prayed the man.

Expressing his deepest yearnings, he made obeisance placing his head on Baba’s feet. Baba in return compassionately blessed him, placing His hand on the man’s head in an attitude of conferring the desired boon saying, “So be it.” At that instant the breath departed from his body leaving it inert and lifeless. Baba and Kamal stood by the side of the recently deceased man.

“Now we should conduct the funeral rites for his dead body,” said Baba.

“But Baba why did You allow him to die? Why are You cremating him? Why don’t You restore him to life? And offer him the opportunity to do bhajan, puja, seva and bhakthi?” she asked.

“That is your will and your thoughts but what did he ask for? I only give what a person requests. Your wishes or solicitations are of no use at this time. He asked for whatever afforded him peace and joy. He has received an enviable death for he asked for nothing else!” returned Baba.

Concluding His exposition Baba hauled the corpse onto His shoulder and deposited it beneath a large tree. He carried out the cremation and other essential funeral rituals in accordance with prescribed customs. Then both Kamal and Baba resumed their journey in the car. Accelerating to the maximum speed they arrived at a dilapidated tumble-down cottage like structure within an hour. On entering they were met with the pitiable sight of a frail old woman, ill, all alone, lying facing the wall. Her body appeared to contain only skin and bone. Perhaps she was suffering from a cancerous disease with all its attendant pain. There was no one present to offer her water, medication or even comfort. She appeared unconscious. Initially Baba offered her water which she drank without stirring or opening her eyes. Such was her state that perhaps she was unaware of doing so. However, after consuming a minute quantity she began to speak. Baba stood aside listening intently.

“Hey Bhagawan, which heinous crime have I committed that You are so harshly chastising me? Why are You not coming? Why won’t You grant darshan? I am not seeking anything else. I crave only to look upon devotees. But these are my final moments. If You do not come now,

when will You come? Mercifully come quickly dear Lord, hasten to me for it is not known how soon before life departs this body. Hey Bhagawan, come swiftly, running, race to my side,” supplicated the devoted old woman. Many times, she repeated this entreaty with as much strength and force as she could muster. As her lips ceaselessly murmured His name, “My Baba, My Sai.” Well, the Lord had arrived. Having administered water, He passed His hand over her boney frame and unbelievably, wondrously she instantly sat up, in perfect health without a trace of her previous ailments. The immensity of positive power and strength she gained from Baba’s touch removed utterly the miseries of pain and sorrow. Her eyes widening in amazement as she gazed lovingly at Baba and embracing Him she fell at His lotus feet.

“Hey Bhagawan, this is the result of Your oceanic mercy. A debt which I could never repay even in many future births,” she said.

“Do not speak of the future for you can repay it in this birth itself within a few moments,” replied Baba.

At this the old woman recollected her obligations of hospitality. Baba, the Lord on earth, had at long last graced her humble abode and it behoved her, a pleasurable duty, to offer tea, milk, refreshments and food. Although Baba protested profusely, she autocratically overruled all objections and speedily prepared tea, she served them. She hastily readied a delicious meal in the space of time it took to dispose of the tea. Kamal gaped in astonishment as to how it had all been accomplished. In the meantime, the agile old woman laid out three trays and commenced serving them with freshly cooked rice, puris and curry, enjoining them to eat. She confidentially informed Baba that she had not eaten since the last many weeks but today however, she had enjoyed and eaten with relish in Baba’s company. The hospitality was superb.

“Accha, now I must go, so grant permission for us to leave,” said Baba.

“Hey Bhagawan,” she said clasping Baba’s feet. “Pray bless me with Your puja, bhakthi, charanseva and namasmaran that I should eternally have Your remembrance and form in my heart. Please confer the boon that I perform all duties and works whilst incessantly chanting Your name,” she begged.

“All that you have requested will be bestowed upon you,” promised Baba magnanimously.

“Baba who is this with You? Please tell me before You go,” she said.

“She, like yourself, is a very dear devotee of Mine. All that you have asked for you will receive,” repeated Baba, conferring His benediction Baba lightly touched her head then they both left to retrace their tracks home via the same route only recently traversed. Unexpectedly a lion suddenly appeared running before the car. Baba braked immediately and alighted. Approaching Baba, the lion fell in a heap at His feet. Baba gently patted its head and soundly thumped its back once. At that instant the lion’s life force departed. Removing the dead body to the side of the road, they recommenced their journey.

“Baba what was all that that happened? Who was the lion?” Kamal asked inquisitively.

“Like him many devotees for many births with various intentions have been awaiting My darshan. What, of whom and how many can I tell you? As the appropriate time arrives for each, I have to act in accordance with those persons wishes. After having My darshan the lion had no further desires, so he concluded his life’s journey and went on. Accha, now we must halt at the same place where we cremated that devotee. Nearby there is a well from which we will fetch water to dampen the ashes. Then I will unveil an unusual miracle for you from the ball of ashes,” replied Baba.

On arriving at the designated spot they both gathered together the ashes and then approached the well for water. The pitch-black blanket of night made it impossible to see the steps or climb down to reach the water.

“Go on, fetch the water,” ordered Baba.

Momentarily Kamal was attacked by misgivings as to how to accomplish the task due to the lack of visibility. Then intrepidly girding her indomitable spirit she put a foot forward on the topmost step. Instantly a radiant luminosity manifested, bathing the entire area in a blaze of light. Jubilantly Kamal descended the steps to the waters edge, only then remembering that she had omitted to bring a vessel for carrying the water. Improvising, she joined her palms and filling them with water she turned to mount the stairway when she noticed the enticing form of Sri Krishna at the centre of and above the water playing enchantingly on his flute. Fascinated, she circled back to stare at the splendorously divine vision, her errand erased from her mind. In a trance-like state she sat down at the waters edge. Impatiently awaiting her return Baba eventually descended the stairway and standing by her side He viewed the scene. However, Kamal was oblivious to her surroundings and Baba’s presence. The vision increased its allurement as Radha joined Krishna. Totally engrossed and enraptured by the ravishing sight Kamal lost all sense of mindfulness, her errand, Baba and herself. Preoccupied, she disregarded Baba’s person next to her.

“So! Charmed by this Krishna you are unheedful of My work? What am I asking you?” He said in exasperation at her evident disinterest.

Kamal offered no response, not even glancing at Him. Enraged, Baba threw her into the water but Sri Krishna helped her up, employing his flute as a lever. Kamal unconcerned remained raptly absorbed in her favourite deity. Then Baba Himself jumped into the water and swam towards the offending vision which immediately disappeared. So Baba retrieved Kamal on His back and returned to the steps. Unbelievably her cupped palms yet held water as she was being carried on Baba’s back.

“Baba let me down, I’ll walk up myself,” said Kamal.

Baba ignored her request and swiftly mounting the steps He set her down by the car only. Appropriating the water from her palms He dampened the heap of ashes to form a ball. At this Anna Maharaj manifested and taking the ball of ashes He proceeded to chant a mantra over it,

informing her that it was the ‘Sanjivani mantra’ (life giving). And what a stupendous miracle occurred? Hands and feet emerged from the ashes and though a head was not yet visible a voice resounded from within, “You liberated me, even so in conformance with Your wishes I am being reformed (the original I). I believe and accept this to be my new birth. I wish that I may be repeatedly blessed with human birth enabling me to continually do bhakthi, puja, seva and namasmaran. I pray to You to fulfil this request of mine,” prayed the partly visible figure. Whilst so formulating his wishes he regained his former form and sang a beautiful devotional song, a gaulan (devotional songs sung by cowherds are generally known by this term).

Na ko bajabu Sri Hari murali re,
tujya murali ne tahan bhuk harli re.
Hey Sri Krishna, do not play Your flute,
Your flute has stolen my hunger and thirst.

Baba appreciatively patted his back with “Bravo! All your wishes will be fulfilled. Now return home and happily engage yourself in My puja, bhajan and namasmaran. There is no necessity for you to pursue any occupation to the extent that you are not to even bother yourself with the filling of water pots. From today onwards I will carry out all your duties,” promised Baba.

“I will do exactly as You have said,” he replied falling at Baba’s feet. He then joyfully followed the road, homeward bound.

Baba and Kamal also resumed their journey home, soon arriving back at the hospital. Enjoining Kamal to seek rest Baba played a captivating melody before departing.

Episode 10

On Thursday Baba manifested at midnight. Kamal offering her namaskar took the proffered charnspars. “Baba please do not mention anything about taking me some place today,” she said.

“Alright we will leave it and not go anywhere today,” replied Baba apparently assenting. “But shall I tell you something? Since coming to Sangali have you ever had darshan of their Ganapati mandir here? You are aware, are you not that the Ganapati manadir here is famous and greatly revered? If you are so inclined we can go there,” said Baba sneakily arousing her curiosity.

Unable to resist the temptation Kamal immediately consented and they both set off on foot. Half way Baba solicitously enquired, “Would you like to drink tea?”

“Baba it is almost twelve o’clock and all the shops and hotels in the vicinity are closed, but if You are definitely desirous for drinking tea then my Uncle Phadke’s house is quite close by, we can drink tea at his house,” replied Kamal.

“Why do you intend to bother your uncle at this time of night? So, what if the shops are closed? If you can offer me tea from your Uncle Phadke’s house, can I not offer you tea from My

shop?” asked Baba. “My shop never closes. I’ll fetch it for you straight away,” He added. At which He seated Kamal on a bus stop bench and retraced His steps back in the direction from which they had come. Almost immediately He returned with two cups of tea.

“From where did You bring the tea so quickly?” asked Kamal.

“You wanted tea, is it not? You have it! Topic closed! Why do you need to know, no matter where it came from?” said Baba in reply.

As soon as the tea was finished the cups and saucers disappeared as if wafted away into thin air. Kamal questioned as to how it had been accomplished but Baba forwarded no reply. They reached the Ganapati mandir to discover it locked. But soon a solitary priest appeared from nowhere, opening the doors he allowed them in, shutting the doors behind them. The requisites for puja were already prepared as if in expectation of their visit. Kamal duly performed the worship and to Kamal’s gratification and delight Ganapati accepted the flowers, milk and prasad with His trunk, smiling happily in return. Concluding the aarthi both walked back to the hospital as nothing more took place that night. As usual Baba sweetly played on the flute and then left.

Episode 11

Another incident from Kamal’s experiences whilst residing at Sangali hospital. Kamal, her husband and her brother-in-law were living within the hospital confines and were experiencing a great deal of problems with regard to the procurement of food and drink. And although they mentioned their troubles to no one, somehow Anna Maharaj cognised their predicament. So, he requested a disciple, Sri Jakate, to organise suitable arrangements for Kamal’s family. However a problem presented itself in that it proved extremely difficult for Sri Jakate, who lived in Miraj, to undertake two to four trips daily, by train, to provide the necessary meals. He longed to be of service to Kamal and her family, but it was beyond his power as he was helpless in the matter. Anna Maharaj had another disciple, Sri Phadke who resided in Sangali itself, so after a general discussion it was decided to offer this responsibility to him. He gladly accepted. But Sri Jakate became deeply distressed and melancholy at his inability to fulfil a task allotted to him by his guru, Anna Maharaj. He wept his sorrow assailed by thoughts of inadequacy, unable to explain even. Kamal understood his condition and tears of sympathy descended from her own eyes also. Although anxiously wishing to advance consolation by way of solicitously comforting words, she failed in her attempts as her own throat refused to co-operate becoming lumpish and dry. They sat in this sombre silence for some time. At last Kamal thought it prudent to introduce another topic which would perhaps alleviate brother Jakate’s mortification.

“Brother you will be attending Shakutai’s daughter Gita’s wedding, will you not?” she asked hopefully.

He nodded affirmatively but continued crying. Glancing up Kamal perceived Baba standing at a distance near the water tank listening and watching this scene intently. Kamal internally prayed to Baba, ‘Baba, You are seeing and hearing everything standing afar. Why don’t You manifest Yourself before brother Jakate? Why don’t You grant him darshan? Look how his condition is worsening? He is incessantly weeping in sorrow and cannot even speak. It is for my sake that he is steeped in misery. Hence my entreaty that You appear before him and confer

darshan. When I am similarly afflicted You usually pass Your hand over my head and back and I instantly regain my peace and composure as if nothing untoward had ever happened. Baba, I pray to You to be merciful to this brother of mine. Please touch his back also so that he can attain peace,' she beseeched on his behalf.

"Kamal just think awhile! Were I to grant darshan to him now what would be his state? You remember, do you not, what I showed you once? The state that devotee was reduced to? Even so you feign ignorance! But it is My duty to keep a watchful eye on all. It is not the appropriate time for pratyaksh darshan. I will not come there. However, My work will be accomplished through you. Meaning that I am present at your place at this moment. This should be explained to him. When he touches your feet, you are to sweep your hand across his back and head and he will immediately become calm. He will believe and feel that Baba Himself has placed His hands on his head. He will attain unruffled peace. Have faith," said Baba.

Although this exchange took place openly between Baba and Kamal brother Jakate neither heard nor saw anything. He silently wept and the tears continued to course down his cheeks.

'Baba, my brother has four small children how can he make two to four such long distance journeys a day? What can my poor sister-in-law do? She is helpless. Perhaps she said some very unkind words to brother Jakate. Please forgive her. I cannot bear to witness brother's tears any longer,' pleaded Kamal to Baba.

Turning to brother Jakate, Kamal advised, "Brother, you should leave now, for your train will soon depart. I understand your predicament. Please do not fret in the least, everything will work out for the best. Now please go," said Kamal.

Brother Jakate obediently rose and still crying placed his head on Kamal's feet. Kamal, as instructed by Baba, put her hand on his head upon which he instantly regained his composure.

"Sister today you did not prevent me from taking darshan?" He queried, raising his head. "Previously you always refused. Today taking darshan, I feel that I am being blessed with Baba's pratyaksh darshan. To enjoy and benefit from this wonderfully superior experience I desire to take darshan three or four times more," he said, now totally at peace.

"Brother take darshan to your heart's content. It could be that this is all taking place in conformance with Baba's wishes," she replied.

Amused, Baba stood smiling from His distant position, His hand raised in benediction. Eventually brother Jakate left. Baba also vanished and Kamal returned to the hospital.

Note: According to the Bhagwat sect darshan means placing one's head upon the feet of the one venerated. Persons belonging to the Bhagwat sect (known also as the Varakri sect) when meeting

or taking leave invariably make obeisance by placing their head upon the others feet. They observe no distinctions of elder or younger, rich or poor, caste or creed or male and female.

Episode 12

On Sunday at eleven in the morning Kamal was busily employed in the washing of clothes at the communal taps in the hospital when Baba unexpectedly manifested asking, "Have you eaten lunch?"

"No," replied Kamal.

"Look I've brought something for you to eat. Here eat these," offered Baba. "I will not eat yet," replied Kamal. "Because the other persons with me have not eaten either. But what have you brought," she asked out of curiosity.

In His handkerchief Baba had ramhal, sitaphal and mousumbi fruits. When He opened it to show Kamal, she suddenly felt a longing to eat a ramphal so she helped herself.

"Now you will not receive anything. Give it back," snapped Baba angrily as He reappropriated it and vanished.

Certain in the knowledge that Baba would return that night Kamal was not unduly affected by Baba's hasty rejoinder. As the washing had been concluded she gathered the clothes into a bucket preparing to leave. Desirous of a drink before going she opened the tap, thoroughly disconcerted to discover that no water issued there from! All the other taps were operative with the women washing clothes and filling water jars at them! Kamal opened the tap a number of times without success. She realised the tap was inoperative solely for her. 'Whose handiwork could that be?' she thought. She cognised it to be none other than Baba's. However, thirst now caused her considerable concern as it increased in degree forthwith.

"So, this is my punishment for having irreverently slighted Baba's offer. Very well Baba, but now I am fairly parched with thirst. I know this also must be in accordance with Your will. But I will also tell You Baba that it is impossible to stay without water so I shall drink the dirty water collected in this ditch here, no matter what the consequences," she retorted to the invisible Baba. Thus, announcing her intention she approached the ditch, at the head of the line of taps, formed by the dirty water collected from the washes. Imagine her confusion on finding the ditch aridly dry. Her thirst grew to unbearable proportions. Ultimately, she decided to drink the water from the container at the hospital. At least that could not dry up! To her utter amazement and consternation not a drop was available from the container. As Kamal watched in bewilderment a woman and a girl came and drank water from the self-same container which refused to yield water for Kamal. When Kamal again attempted to draw water from it, it became apparently empty again. 'Never mind,' she consoled herself. 'I'll be the first to drink water from the jug my brother-in-law brings with lunch.'

He no sooner arrived and put down the jug than Kamal descended upon it. Before even a drop of the precious liquid could reach her lips, her brother-in-law interrupted with the advice, "Do not drink that water. I have already drunk from it. Why are you drinking before eating anyway? How will you eat afterwards? Hand the jug over here, it is my remnant water and only I will drink it. You eat your lunch, and I will fetch you some fresh water later," he promised.

Poor Kamal watched helplessly, unable to protest. Somehow, she succeeded in consuming her meal despite the fact that by now she was virtually dying of thirst. Later when her brother-in-law went for water he returned empty handed as the taps were off again. 'Baba's will' thought Kamal, maintaining her silence. Two long hours dragged by in this state of parched agony until unable to bear it any longer she decided to try the taps again. Midway her eye fell on a half eaten discarded ramphal lying in her path. Not comprehending her own actions even, Kamal swiftly picked it up and put a small piece to her mouth. Immediately the tap automatically, mysteriously opened itself and water cascaded down. Kamal ran to drink her fill. At this the bit of fruit fell from her lips into the gutter. Though unusually unhappy at this turn she continued drinking. Thereafter she decided to relax in the hospital gardens. Appreciating the beauties of nature, the day waned and before long it was six o'clock in the evening. An old man approached her.

"Daughter, would you like any of these fruits," he asked, placing a basket full of ramphal, sitaphal and mousumbi before her.

"Grandfather I'd certainly have purchased a sitaphal, but what can I do? I have no money with me now. My brother-in-law has gone somewhere, and it is not known when he will return," Kamal replied.

At this the kindly old man removed a ramphal from the basket and placed it in her hand. "Nevermind, you are living in the hospital, are you not? I come here every day so you can pay me tomorrow," he said.

Recollecting the morning's events Kamal, adding two and two together, deduced that perhaps this was one of Baba's pranks and therefore she should not refuse the gift. So, she accepted the proffered fruit happily with, "Please wait here for just five minutes and I'll fetch the money now."

On entering her husband's room, she saw that her brother-in-law had already returned and both brothers were earnestly engrossed in conversation. Kamal requesting fifty paisa for a cup of tea returned outside to where the old man sat awaiting her return. Kamal deposited the money in the palm of his hand, but it slipped through his fingers. Retrieving it Kamal replaced it only to have it fall again. This little act was repeated four times.

"What is the matter why are you not taking the money? Why are you deliberately letting it fall," she asked finally.

"You are dropping it yourself," he replied. "My hand is in exactly the same place! But the money does not wish to come to me. You keep it," he added.

As he finished the sentence Kamal was afforded the genuine darshan of Baba in his place. Joyfully Kamal prostrated clasping Baba's feet. The fruit basket now overflowed with flowers of five to six varieties. Although amazingly they were all of a yellow hue. Kamal now initiated a search for her missing fifty paisa, which seemed to have mysteriously vanished.

"Baba, You must have taken my fifty paisa, return it to me," she said.

"Why," He replied, "hasn't the fondness for money left you yet."

Disdaining a reply, Kamal's attention was attracted by the sweet fragrance emanating from the flowers. She briskly lifted a handful with both hands' intent upon breathing in the exquisite scent when she noticed a twenty-five paisa coin each on two of the flower stalks. Kamal tried to remove them, but they stuck firm. Before her very eyes all the flowers transformed into flowers of gold. Now they all appeared to have twenty-five paisa coins stuck on them.

"Accha, you may keep these two flowers since your money is attached to them," said Baba

"Baba what will I do with flowers of gold?" she asked as she silently deliberated 'Accepting these flowers I'll offer them to Baba. Even so, in reality the entire universe is His. Then again when will she be ever presented with this opportunity to worship God with flowers of gold?' As she reached this conclusion the basket of flowers vanished.

"Today within five minutes you are about to have a new darshan. But I must go as I have much work to do," said Baba before disappearing.

Kamal was thoroughly perplexed as to who would now grant her darshan since Baba had already departed on urgent business. How will the darshan occur? At this, darshan of the Narasimha avatar of God became manifest amidst the juncture of branches of a large tree nearby. Kamal stared in astonished fascination, so Narasimha himself smoothly broke the ice.

"Which God or Goddess are you devoted to that I am obliged to confer darshan today," he asked.

"I do not worship any one particular deity but am firmly established in the belief He is present in the whole universe. Baba also reiterates that the one God resides in all in the one form. Now I wish to worship you but Baba is not present so who will create the puja articles for me? Here there is only earth and gravel. Instinctively her mind responded with 'Do it with this'. So why delay? Kamal promptly set to work. Employing her thumb and middle finger she lifted a little earth and applied it to Narasimha's forehead stating, "Here is kumkum." Kamal was stupefied to see the earth she had applied take on the red colour and texture of kumkum. Taking another pinch of earth "Here is bukka," she said applying it to the forehead again. (bukka is a fine black powder similar to haldi and kumkum utilised in worship). That pinch of earth appeared as bukka on Narasimha's forehead.

“And these are rice grains,” said Kamal applying another bit of earth, and indeed they manifested as such. “And these are fragrant flowers,” said Kamal as those particles of earth transformed themselves into flowers on his forehead. Kamal desired to garland the Lord with flowers. She looked around and spying a piece of string, she knotted both ends together. “And this is a garland of flowers,” she stated as she garlanded the deity. Immediately it became a beautiful flower garland around his neck. Kamal marvelled, as she had merely employed humble earth in her worship but with Narasimha’s grace his puja had been concluded according to the prescribed rites. Kamal repeated the rituals. In fact she was uncommonly struck with and thoroughly enjoyed this game. Utilising the earth and gravel she continued, “This is kumkum, these are flowers and these are rice grains,” until his entire countenance was covered and hidden with flowers. Only then did Kamal cease her play and remove the flowers.

“With what calm patience you have accepted my clumsy puja. Today I am truly fortunate. By repetitively carrying out puja I have disturbed you greatly, but what can I do? My mind was not fully replete,” she offered by way of apology.

“Is it satisfied now or not?” he asked. “Accha, now tell me where has your Baba gone to?”

“What sort of talk is this?” she asked surprised. “Why, is Baba not within you? Or are you not within Baba? Baba informed me that ‘I am in any God and should you so desire you can visualise any God within Me’. So why are you intent upon upsetting me by asking such questions? Why are you trying to trick me with words?”

“Yes! What you have said is quite correct,” he agreed laughing patting Kamal on the back. “May you always be victorious,” he added. Conferring this supreme benediction, he disappeared and Baba reappeared standing by her side.

“The golden flowers I gave you, did you use them in Narasimha’s worship or not?” He asked.

Recollecting them Kamal remembered that she had the flowers before but where were they now? Searching, she discovered no trace of them. However, she suddenly became aware of a Saligram and a Shivling which had inexplicably manifested in her hands.

“I forgot all about the golden flowers and used earth for his worship,” she replied sadly. Deeply regretting her thoughtlessness she related the whole affair to Baba, virtually in tears.

“Never mind, not to worry, there is no harm done,” He consoled. “You may keep the Saligram and the Shivling with you for now and return it to Me when I come tonight,” He said.

Kamal prostrated before all three: Baba, the Saligram and the Shivling. Baba vanished and Kamal made her way to the hospital. That night, as promised, Baba manifested at two o’clock and enquired after the Saligram and Shivling. Kamal instigated an immediate search for them in her hands, her handkerchief, a small cupboard and various other places without any success. Then the

truth dawned upon her. “Baba both those items are with You. Show me where You have hidden them,” she said wisely.

Baba opened both hands to reveal both articles firmly stuck to and embedded within the skin of each palm. “Take them out,” He commanded.

Dattatreya guru also appeared and stood by Baba’s side. All Kamal’s attempts at dislodging them proved futile. How could they be extracted from beneath the skin? Hoping to enlist Dattaguru’s aid, she requested, “Please you remove them,” she said to him. “For I do not have the necessary strength.”

They both laughed uproariously as Baba said, “No one will help you. Remove them yourself. You’ll have to extract them yourself.”

Kamal acknowledged that this problem was unresolvable by force therefore she needed resort to the support of logical reasoning skilfully employed. “If You and Dattaguru Maharaj are one then the Shivling and Saligram will be dislodged from Baba’s hands. However, if there is a differential distinction between the two, they will remain there,” she stated cunningly.

Instantaneously both articles leapt out from Baba’s hands into Kamal’s. Baba jubilantly patted Kamal’s back, played the flute and vanished.

Episode 13

Two days later, at approximately two in the morning, the flute playing programme commenced. Kamal, roused from her slumber, could see no one. Neither Baba, nor any other deity was perceptible yet the lilting, haunting music was distinctly audible. The day before when Baba had visited her, she had indiscreetly made lighthearted bantering amusement of Baba’s face and apparel. She had jokingly referred to Baba as a fakir and false aestic along with various other uncomplimentary epithets. Going so far as to state categorically that His hair style did not suit and that He should adopt a more respected style. Suggesting for instance the total removal of all His hair or alternatively encouraging its growth so that it could be stranded rope like in imagery of the ancient rishis. Whilst on the subject Kamal, in high spirits, disparaged Baba’s long frock like kafni, advising that He should don a dhoti with a simple but elegant kurta top in emulation of her guru, Anna Maharaj. However, now all these scornful comments were glaringly recollected, and she was angry at and thoroughly ashamed of herself and her cruel cutting remarks. ‘Baba is angry hence the invisible flute playing. Why shouldn’t He be offended?’ she chided herself. ‘He is the world’s Swami and the supreme king of the cosmos, the emperor of all He surveys. Even so He deigns to enter daily the portals of my poor, humble home. And I! I speak to Him in such derogatory terms!’ she lamented her own folly.

Kamal developed an intense aversion and disgust of herself as she penitently sobbed. Her expiatory weeping displayed no inclination of declining. Just then a charming five-year-old moorthi of Gopal Krishna manifested before her. Enchanting to behold in his graceful pitamber, gem studded crown with an attractive peacock feather jauntily stuck in and the inseparable murali

tucked in at the waist. His adorable feet crossed traditionally, and his head enticingly cocked to one side. Such was the divinely entrancing form in front of her. Placing her head upon his lotus feet Kamal wept even more profusely.

“Hey, Dev, how unfortunate I am! How many errors I continuously commit. In the whole world there is probably none as foolish as me. Still, you absolve me! You visit me! What did I not say to Baba?” she said in a tone of self condemnation. “Being enraged He has sent you to play the flute today, has He not? Discarding His own form, He wished to offer darshan in the Krishna form. Beggars and poverty stricken persons like me though confronted with great treasure before them, turning aside go towards a rubbish heap. The all-encompassing, all-powerful provider and Lord of the universe appears before me and even from Him I ask for a begging bowl. Why have you endowed me with so limited an intellect? Why have you made me so ignorant? Seeing the collected heap of my sins how could you make me your devotee? You are in truth the ocean of compassion, uplifter of the stricken and support of the refugeless and yet how rudely insolent was a foolish girl like me to you. Even after all this you are unruffled and calmly carry on playing the flute. Hey anandarupa Sri Krishna, my son why do I make so many mistakes? When I make these errors why do you not reprimand me and correct me? My child, will you keep me in ignorance always?” she asked sadly.

“Today I am very happy,” replied Sri Krishna putting down his flute. “Until today no one has ever called me son or my child before. I donned the guise of the young Sri Krishna form simply to hear those sweet endearing words. Now listen, there is no fault of yours. A devotee has the right to say anything to God. He can say whatever he wishes. And God, he has the fortitude to listen unperturbed to all that a devotee may say. You cannot gauge, measure or even estimate the depth of God’s capacity to bear with these things. And what you did say was all superficial. It did not reflect your innate nature or your true attitude. In your heart you love God very much. Otherwise why this sincere repentance?” asked Sri Krishna.

“My child, being angry Himself Baba has sent you to play the flute, has He not?” she asked.

“Child?” repeated Sri Krishna in mock disbelief. “Actually, it is you who are the child. When will your ignorance be removed? When will the veil of maya and attachment go? How many times have I explained to you that Baba is in me and I am in Baba. God is only One. He has to don many forms. But when this ignorance of yours will be dispersed is not known. If I call you ignorant then at times you stun me with such wise philosophical expositions as if you were the fount of wisdom. If I refer to you as egoless then you sometimes speak with immense pride. However, were I to call you half ignorant and half wise, it does not seem so! What shall I call you? See how you cast me into a quandary creating a problem for me? Now tell me who is greater, you or Me?” he asked in amusement.

“Why are You offering me false flattery thereby encouraging and increasing my ignorance and pride?” replied Kamal in tears once again. “Baba, I pray to You to explain and instruct me in wisdom again,” she added.

“Accha, listen, whilst narrating the Geeta to Arjun, you remember I said;

Sarvadarmanparityajya mamekam sharanam vraja
aham tva sarvapapebhyo mokshayishyami masuchah

In the same way I am telling you, ‘Come to My lotus feet. I will absolve you from all sins and grant the perception, knowledge and understanding of all things, releasing you from the bondage of the cycle of births and deaths. You simply take refuge at My feet and cease all worries.’ Do exactly as I say for only then will your duality be destroyed.”

As the flute programme had already been performed Baba no sooner finished His explanation than He vanished.

CHAPTER 7

November 1978

It was the special occasion of Bhai dhuj. In Maharashtra Diwali is celebrated for three days (first day Narak chaturdarshi, second day Laxmi puja, third day Bhai dhuj). Today Baba changed His usual programme arriving at eight thirty in the evening instead of two in the morning.

“Today one of My devotees is seriously ill and therefore I must go to him. As I would have been unable to come at two o’clock, I have come to you now,” He informed her straight away.

“Baba You constantly create problems for me. Today is Diwali day and there is a great deal of work to do so why don’t You go and see Your devotee now, conclude Your business there and return at two?” she asked logically.

“No! I cannot possibly come at two tonight,” insisted Baba.

“What is this so involved work that it cannot be finished between eight and two? If You cannot come, then do not. But right now, I do not have any time either,” replied an exasperated Kamal.

“Accha, I’ll conclude the two o’clock flute playing now and then leave?” offered Baba.

“No, there is no need to play the flute now. If it is left, it doesn’t matter. He is a devotee, and I am a devotee and it is Your duty to uphold Your word to and protect both of us. Then why do You do this? That You guard and protect one whilst causing distress to the other? You should pacify and satisfy both devotees. I know nothing other than the fact that my allotted time is at two,” said Kamal adamantly.

“Accha, I’ll come at two tonight. Now can I leave quickly?” He asked.

“As You wish,” responded Kamal.

“Alright, I’ll stop awhile. I have an hour to spare. Show Me that ring on your finger. Which is it?” asked Baba inquisitively.

“Why are You scrutinising my ring Baba? It does not have Your photograph upon it. It is a ring in name only and certainly not worthy of being referred to as Your ring,” replied Kamal.

“If that is so, why do you wear it?” queried Baba.

“I wear it because it is Baba’s. Now You will say to me, how can I call it Baba’s ring when it does not have Baba’s photograph on it? The answer to that question is, that to me it seems like Baba’s ring, that’s why,” replied Kamal presupposing His opposition.

“The extent of argumentation on the handing over of one ring! Here, give it to Me,” said Baba half smiling. Accepting the proffered ring Baba placed it on His own finger.

“Baba it does not suit Your hand. Now give it to me,” chided Kamal.

“Let it remain with Me for two days. Can I ask you something? In your mandir have you ever heard any unusual sound? Do not shake your head. You have heard it many times. Your son also informed you a couple of times that a particular tone emanates from there. When you went to investigate you also heard it,” said Baba.

“Yes, the other family members have also mentioned that they occasionally hear something akin to a bee buzzing. I did not pay any undue attention to it. Then one day Ram (Kamal’s son) took me to the mandir to verify it but on checking, there was no bee to be found anywhere. You are quite right I have heard the strange sound,” agreed Kamal.

“At the time when the others hear the buzzing sound you are aware of the flute being played, are you not?” clarified Baba.

“When did that happen? I do not exactly recollect it,” replied Kamal deep in thought.

“Look, it happened many times. Try to remember. On Monday night at ten the flute was being played, or so it appeared to you, however I was not visibly present at the time,” Baba reminded her.

“Yes, that happened, does happen. But I always believed that at such times You must be invisibly present somewhere,” she countered.

“No, on that day it was the bee buzzing only to you it sounded like a flute,” replied Baba.

“Baba, tell me one thing, can this particular sound be heard by everyone? It is my longing that all should hear the flute as I do. When this bee is buzzing in the mandir there are other people in the house who occasionally go by the room. Why don’t they hear it too?” she asked.

“Your wish is, how wonderful it would be if everyone were to hear the sound of the bee! However, since when do they cultivate that desire? Has anyone ever expressed this ambition to you? No? So what urgent necessity is there for you to do so? Whether it is heard by them or not why are you bent upon forcing your will upon their minds? When the Viswaswarup darshan was conferred on Arjuna there were thousands present all around, they did not receive darshan. There are some people who express a desire but it is nothing but an empty shallow fancy. Just inclination alone will not suffice, eligibility is also essential,” replied Baba.

“Eligibility or ineligibility, who created this system? It is You who initiated the system of merit and demerit, is it not? It did not come into being by itself! So how can their worthiness be decided? You are the one who decides and awards these merits and demerits. If You once allow them to hear the flute their trust and faith will automatically increase. Love will take root in the hearts of those who presently have no faith or love for You,” said Kamal countering Baba’s comments with simple logic.

“Bravo, well, well! What an easy simple path you have discovered for these people. If a child refuses to attend school and yet forwards a request for a B.A. degree, why, will it be granted

for the asking? Or more important, should it be given to him? Will it be correct to do so? In that case no one needs exert themselves! They can simply continue to ask! To merely earnestly covet is another matter but to attain your aspirations through industrious zeal, trouble, trials and tests and by enhancing your worthiness is another matter. Should both viewpoints be considered the same? Even in the spiritual field something can be gained only through sadhana and austerities. Nothing is granted by merely sitting and begging. However, were these people ever awarded the opportunity to hear the flute its value would be accounted in name only due to their lack of purity in intellect. Perhaps for five minutes they may be enraptured and have a penchant for it, but the state of bliss will not remain. Owing to their minds' waywardness they cannot accomplish anything with any degree of depth and concentration. They should understand and realise that after entering this world they have to confront and overcome sorrow and joy, sin and merit and high and low status ships. However, they have a partiality only for worldly comfort and joy. These materialistic people are quite satisfied and perhaps their equilibrium is unaffected whilst happiness is theirs. But once fate slaps them in the face with sorrow, they immediately lose all peace of mind. They begin to hurl abuse at Me," explained Baba at length. "But your state is not so. Whether you receive sorrow or joy your mental condition remains stable. How much distress I give you, happiness also, but on both occasions your equilibrium is maintained unruffled. No matter the extent to which I mortify you, the very next instant you expectantly await My return. Anxiously concerned you wait for My coming not thinking once as to whether you will be awarded joy or sorrow. You simply ceaselessly call out to Me with love, do you not? These people cannot do this. Therefore, what is conferred on you and is yours cannot be theirs. Now you cease being wilful on account of this," said Baba.

"Baba, nevertheless, it is my will that for my sake you once confer this grace," pleaded Kamal

"Accha, fine, I'll play the flute with all My might, and you see for yourself whether anyone hears it or not? Whether anyone comes here to listen to it? And whether those who slumber will they wake or not?" said Baba.

"Good, we will see today. I know You will lose, wait and see. Dropping everything they will rush and gather here. Just as the cows and the gopis and gopikas gathered in Vrindavan they will run here. Baba what a sight that will be!" said Kamal enthusiastically.

Approximately one hour was expended by these deliberations and it was now approaching nine. All the family members were awake and as usual, engrossed in their various evening activities. Baba proceeded to play the flute in a distinctly high tone in the mandir. In the kitchen assuming the form of a bumble bee, He commenced the melody there also. Kamal jubilantly went out onto the verandah eagerly awaiting events whilst enthralled by the haunting strains of Krishna's enticing love filled music. Before long she hastily ran to the kitchen.

"Baba do not play so loudly. Only play loud enough so the household members hear, not the entire neighbourhood. Otherwise, some fifty persons will congregate," she complained.

"Even were I to create a fanfare, will anyone come? However never mind. No one outside the precincts of the house will hear anything," He promised as He recommenced playing in a high-

sounding piercing tone. The family were busily engaged in their respective occupations and leisure interests. No one paid any heed to the ear-splitting rendition. Kamal was the sole person privileged to hear the resounding clamour and her amazement turned to speechless awe as she attempted to fathom their inability to cognise the blaring music. Had they all become deaf?

“Now you see! What state is theirs; they are completely ignorant. They are all so immersed in their daily life, their activities, that they are unable to recognise any other sounds. It will only be audible when attended to with a balanced internal poise, is it not? But whose intellect and mind are steady? And you are asking Me to play for them? How am I supposed to make them hear?” He asked.

“This must also be some cunning trick of Yours. You do not wish them to hear. Only to remove my doubts have You played with such force,” retorted Kamal.

“Absolutely not! I have not played any tricks this time. You go and ask anyone whether they have heard the bumble bee buzzing or not? Then you will comprehend everything yourself. Go!” ordered Baba.

Kamal first asked her two children. “Did you hear any sound or not?”

“Yes,” they responded. “We heard a bee buzzing.”

Kamal decided that due to their tender years perhaps they failed to realise the significance of what they had heard. So, she repeated the same question to the others but none of them had been privileged to hear anything at all. Since Kamal was making these enquiries, they assumed that something must be afoot therefore they listened more intently.

Kamal quickly went to Baba. “Baba the children are quite young and although they were aware of the buzzing, poor things what can they understand? But the rest heard nothing. Nevertheless, I entreat You please play just one more time,” she begged.

Kamal questioned everyone again and they all replied in the negative except the children who reiterated their previous response. Mortified, Kamal entered the kitchen and stood before Baba with head bent in an attitude of defeat, ‘I have lost’ she indicated sitting forlornly.

Baba deeply pained, changed the subject in an effort to divert Kamal’s mind. “Now within three to four days you will receive a letter from Shakutai. I’ll reveal the contents of the letter, ‘Kamal your heart and mind are transparently clear which is why everything appears pure and beautiful to you. You are prepared to offer anything to anyone, but I am unworthy to receive it. I am ineligible to receive all the grace which Baba has showered on you’.”

“When the letter arrives, I’ll read it. But what are Your intentions? Tell me the truth Baba, will You not let them hear the flute?” she asked in an attempt to persuade Baba again.

“Again, that topic? How many times will I have to explain to you? I cannot. I am constrained and it is beyond Me. I played the flute twice, did I not? What was the result? Look, whatever attitude a devotee approaches Me with, whatever they ask for, I grant. That they should request one thing, and I present them with another, this cannot be. Whatever is asked for will be

conferred, the exact amount requested will be provided. That is the rule, the law,” Baba stated categorically.

“Alright. So, what has Shakutai asked for? With what purpose and intention has she come to You?” asked Kamal.

“What she intends to ask for, you ask her. Why are you asking Me? Why do you believe she has obstinately insisted upon pratyaksh darshan? Most definitely not. That is only your wishful thinking. Since returning from Puttaparthi she is quite content and happy to merely gaze upon My countenance. In that alone she attains complete satisfaction. The quantity she has requested I have conferred. I have granted and will do so in the future all that offers her total peace of mind. Her expectancy is only so much. That ‘Baba will grant darshan’ is something you initiated and therefore for a short space she experienced an intense desire for darshan. However, later her mind reverted back to its normal state. Simply by looking upon My photograph she is happy. By listening to My bhajans she gains bliss,” He replied.

“No matter what You say my heart and mind are resolved and positive that after pratyaksh darshan she would become delirious with rapturous bliss. Why would she evidence a desire for darshan to me if she had no real wish for it?” asked Kamal logically.

“That is not difficult to explain for it is all the play of your mind and your self-willed obstinacy. You believe that since you are blessed with this type of Baba’s darshan, why shouldn’t she be too? Hence it is your persistent resolve that I confer darshan. But she has no such predilection. Now when her letter arrives you will be disturbed and concerned on her behalf. However, is she ever as perturbed for your sake? No,” replied Baba answering His own question. “She only proposes to see to what extent God fulfils your resolve. That is why she has written ‘Your mind is pure and beautiful’. Her intention is to see how much pride will develop in you due to her flattery, hence her letter and its purpose,” concluded Baba.

“Alright, alright, tell me this, have You yet given darshan to Shakutai or not?” she asked.

“When it is to be given, I will. It was Shakutai, was it not, who wrote to you saying, ‘Do not force the unripe fruit to ripen quickly. Ripening in time it will be sweeter.’ Just keep this in your mind. It will ripen in time and will be offered to Me for eating. Therein lies her welfare,” replied Baba.

I am well aware that You probably informed her of all this and now You are also telling me. It is all Your play. Poor Shakutai, her soul must be indeed agitated and restless,” said Kamal feelingly.

“Her heart and mind are perfectly peaceful. However, yours is not. When you are at peace, she will also appear at peace to you. It is Shakutai who has written that your heart is pure which is why all others are viewed in the same light by you. Until such time as I confer darshan on her your mind will be unsettled for her to have darshan and that in turn will create discontent in her also. She cannot be satisfied until you are content. She is caused more distress and ensuing discomposure by the very fact that you are trying for her to be granted darshan. In herself she does not have the intense craving for pratyaksh darshan,” responded Baba at length.

“No matter what, how impatient she must be for Your darshan. Her soul is probably suffering like a fish out of water. You Yourself once stated that when the mind and heart suffer extreme impassioned anguish only then is darshan conferred. Sometimes You say one thing at other times another. On every occasion You indisputably prove Your own words true and correct. Alright then, do as You will. Of what account are we? We are merely devotees, You are God. Concealing Yourself behind the curtain You make us dance and we must dance as You wish because You hold the strings. You pull the strings, and we continue dancing. What does it matter to You that people seeing our dance may ridicule us and amuse themselves at our expense? Who can realise that we do not voluntarily dance ourselves but that it is You who is forcing us to enact the drama? The fact that You hide behind the screen, and no one can see You is the cause of all the problems,” said Kamal not mincing matters.

“I must leave now, it is getting late,” replied Baba, changing the subject.

“Baba today is Diwali day. I wish to bathe You. This morning, I bathed Anna Maharaj and now it’s Your turn,” replied Kamal ignoring Baba’s leave taking.

“I’ve bathed many times today,” countered Baba. “There are numerous devotees like yourself of Mine. Were I to begin bathing in every house, what would become of My body? There will be nothing left,” He ended seriously.

“I see, so many devotees have already bathed You? In that case I too have certain rights. I’ll also bathe You. And nothing will be left of Your body? We’ll see that too. How and why won’t there be anything left? You wait here. I’ll just go and light the stove, put some wood in and put some water on to heat. As soon as it is hot I’ll quickly bathe You,” she promised.

“Look do this, just massage some oil on Me and forget about the bath,” advised Baba.

Happily, Kamal gratefully accepted the extra bonus under the old adage ‘The blind man asked for one eye, but God provided two’. She was now wonderfully blessed with the golden opportunity of massaging oil on to Baba. With a jaunty step she delightedly fetched the bottle of oil. Taking a little oil in her hand she applied it to Baba’s hair first. To her consternation they were not in the least bit greasy. Using a small quantity each time until finally in exasperation she ended up emptying the entire bottle onto Baba’s hair but amazingly the hair remained as dry and greaseless as before. What was to be done now?

“What sort of hair have You Baba?” she asked on the verge of tears. “All the oil is proving inadequate for such a mass of hair,” she complained.

“Never mind use whatever you have, it will become apparent afterwards,” He advised. “By the way it is not your intention that I create more oil for you, is it? There is no harm in providing it. Only later it is you who will say ‘It is not right or proper to receive and return Your own gift to You’. That is why I am not offering you any. Now come, bathe Me,” He said.

“In the happiness of applying the oil I completely forgot to add wood to the fire. I’ll go now and light it and put some water on to heat,” she replied.

“No, leave it now. Cold water will suffice,” responded Baba.

“No Baba, the water is bitterly cold. Nowadays the weather is very inclement. What if You were to catch a cold,” she argued, Baba’s health uppermost in her mind.

Submerged in their love for God, devotees forget that He is formless and without attributes. For Him the body is of little account. His mortal frame remains unaffected by the extreme variations in temperature. The endearing love which pertains between a mother and her darling child, between God and His beloved devotee ensures the prevention of such logical wisdom from coming between them. Devotees who have attained this imminent state are invariably one with God. And God, in return, dispenses with His formless attributeless state condescending to become formful to carry out His tasks. Happily, joyful in that alone. This is the power of love, the miracle of devotion.

“Why don’t you put your hand in the pail of water and see for yourself whether it is hot or cold,” replied Baba.

“Baba, I know it is cold, very cold, for it is I who fills up the pails,” retorted Kamal.

“Even so, because I say so, try,” recommended Baba.

Kamal plunged her hand into the water and her surprised wonder became evident for the water was indeed quite warm, perfectly acceptable for winter bathing. Kamal proceeded with the rest of the bathing arrangements. Her bathroom, if it could be called such, was in conformance with those presently found in small villages. Separated from the main structure it is located at the back of the house. Lacking a roof, it is constructed of three walls and a curtain, dispensing with the formality of a door and lock. In fact, the walls themselves were barely two feet in height and the bathing area very restricted and cramped. Kamal introduced into that already confined space, a small low wooden stool like plank for Baba to sit upon as she felt instinctively that He (God) should not be so demeaned as to be made to sit on the floor. Baba duly seated Himself on the stool, which was proving a trifle small, not to mention the tiny size of the bathroom. Kamal soon discovered the impossibility of bathing Baba so, as her mobility was restricted to the point of being virtually at a standstill. Supporting herself by holding Baba’s shoulder she squeezed around.

“Baba how can I bathe You like this?” she finally complained. “How very big You are? There is no room for me at all. Please assume a smaller form, such as the size of my Ram and Laxman (Kamal’s two sons),” she begged.

“No! Only for the sake of a bath I am to become small. And if I do, you will bathe Me with less water and hurry Me out. I require heaps and heaps of water,” replied a fastidious Baba.

“I’ll bathe You properly with lots of water only do become small now Baba!” she pleaded. “Then I too will receive the complete joy and satisfaction of bathing You as I long to.”

Baba obligingly complied, assuming the size of an eight-year-old child and seated Himself once again on the plank. Kamal filled a jar of water in preparation when she suddenly noticed that Baba had omitted to remove His kafni. “Baba do take off Your kafni,” she said.

“No! of course not. This always stays on My body I will not take it off. Bathe Me with it on. Tell Me, do you have a spare set of clothes in your house for Me? Or will you make Me wear childrens clothes?” He asked mockingly.

“No, of course not. I’ll give You some other clothes and once the kafni is dry You can wear it again,” replied Kamal seriously.

“You will never agree. Alright take it off,” said Baba wearily.

Kamal, pleased at Baba’s defeat, promptly removed the kafni but to her utter bewilderment another one, exactly the same, was revealed underneath. When the second was taken off a third was unveiled. In the same way eleven such kafnis lay in a heap. Kamal stupefied and tired, arrived at the conclusion ‘It appears that Baba has no intention of bathing’.

“Baba, the kafni will get wet if You bathe whilst wearing it. Then how will You go?” she asked.

“Look, do not make yourself unhappy. My bathing is always like this. You just bathe Me. Pour as much water as you like over Me and do not worry about the kafni getting soaked. My body radiates enough heat to ensure that the kafni will dry completely by the time I’ve walked back to the house. You see, it will not even be damp,” said Baba consolingly.

“That’s as maybe but what will You do with these eleven kafnis now?” she asked.

“Leave them for now. If this one gets wet, they will be useful,” He replied.

“Baba, not so. You have numerous kafnis so You can wear one of those. I’ll wash this kafni by tomorrow for You and You can take it then. When I take it for washing, I’ll show everyone ‘Look this is Baba’s kafni, take darshan of it,’” she said happily.

“How can that be? This kafni will not remain wet, you wait and see,” replied Baba dashing all her hopes.

“It will become dirty from the water or soiled by sitting here,” she said hopefully.

“No, it will not. It will stay just as it is. Afterwards you will see it is so,” promised Baba.

“However, it is my determination that I will keep this kafni for washing,” she insisted.

“Accha, accha. if it stays wet you may definitely keep it but if it remains dry then you are not to take it,” compromised Baba.

Unfortunately for Kamal the kafni had dried to a crisp by the time they re-entered the house. Kamal became furious. “You do not intend that I wash the kafni,” she accused.

“Accha, wash it if you want to. But now, not in the morning,” said Baba.

“What harm will it do if You left it till the morning? I want to show it to everyone,” she replied.

“It is fast becoming apparent that it’s not so much the yearning to wash it as to exhibit it. Wash it if you so desire, but why this partiality for displaying it to others? Has anyone ever asked you ‘Please show me Baba’s kafni?’ Had anyone ever expressed such a desire, yes, then perhaps I would have given it,” He declared.

“Fine Baba, I’ll wash it tonight, but it will not dry so quickly. You can collect it when You return at two. Now I want to do Your aarthi,” she said prudently changing the subject before Baba could pose any further opposition to her plan.

“After doing aarthi on Diwali day there is a custom among you people to offer something, is there not? Tell Me, what do you want? What gift shall I give you?” He asked.

“What I want I’ll tell You afterwards. First You give me what You wish to give,” replied Kamal diplomatically.

“I’ll gift Myself to you. Will it suffice?” He asked.

“What are You saying Baba? So supreme a bestowal? Can anyone ever refuse? Can anyone ask for anything greater?” she replied completely overwhelmed.

Nevertheless, Baba also deposited a large gold locket in the aarthi tray and, promising to return at two prepared to leave. “You have blessed me with so grand a gift, so what possible value can this have?” she asked, handing back the offending locket. “Please accept this back and return my ring to me.”

Baba took the proffered locket but did not return the ring. Contrary to His usual practice of vanishing on the spot, today Baba walked outside and gradually disappeared. Three delicious hours had sped by and now it was eleven thirty. Keeping His word Baba remanifested at two in the morning by which time the matter of the kafni had been completely obliterated from Kamal’s mind. Initially she had vowed to herself that she would definitely show it to somebody at least. But what now? Baba had already arrived! Plunged into the seemingly unsolvable quandary of how and to whom to reveal the precious kafni to, she stooped to employ deception. “Baba please sit here for a while. I’ll be back soon. I must visit the bathroom,” said Kamal inventing an excuse.

Stealthily retrieving the kafni she camouflaged it in paper and hiding it under her arm stole towards the verandah where Mangal, her niece, lay fast asleep. Kamal briskly shook her, but Mangal roused from the depths of slumber, still drowsy, asked her an unrelated query. Kamal deftly attempted to take the kafni from under her arm and.....! It had bafflingly vanished. Remorseful, hurt and a little frightened of the consequences of lying, resorting to deceit and to what purpose? Contrite, she roundly reproached herself for her unbelievable folly. Who’s to know that had she not lied perhaps Baba would ultimately have consented to her request. Burning with shame, humbled she went and sat before Baba, her eyes glued to the ground in embarrassment. “Baba, Your kafni has been stolen. I hung it out to dry, but it is no longer there, it’s gone,” she said sorrowfully.

“Stolen? But you have already given it to Me. Look here,” replied Baba cleverly.

“Where?” asked Kamal in disbelief.

“See here, it’s with Me,” said Baba as He displayed the garment of contention.

Adopting this method Baba at once concealed and covered up her crime whilst at the same time revealing His knowledge of it to her. Kamal prayerfully supplicated, “Baba, suppose some person loves You enormously and is wholly devoted to You then what possible harm can there be in showing that person Your kafni? If that person has, due to circumstances, been unable to visit Puttaparthi or have Your darshan, then can You imagine the bliss derived by that person from simply having darshan of Your kafni? Is that not so? Look Baba, Mangal loves You so much, but she could not come to Puttaparthi. Although You are present here every day, she is not graced with Your darshan. In addition, I have never once insisted that You confer darshan on her. Therefore, what is wrong in showing her the kafni? Only to Mangal, Baba. Please! Go then!” she said angrily at Baba’s obvious denial. “I have no inclination to speak with You or listen to the flute today. Why did You do this?” she added.

“I am fully aware of what I have done,” replied Baba.

“Baba, please give me the kafni,” she entreated. “I’ll swiftly show it to Mangal and return it to You. Only to her, no one else,” she promised.

Snatching it from Baba’s hands, clutching it for dear life Kamal raced over to where Mangal lay. Whilst desperately tugging and pulling to awaken her with one hand, she clung like ivy to the precious treasure with the other, keeping it within her vision. Having cognised in advance the extent of Mangal’s pique and sorrow at waking up and discovering the kafni gone, Kamal watched it and her hand like a hawk to prevent its disappearance. Notwithstanding this, her fists gradually loosened until eventually the kafni slipped away and vanished from before her very eyes. Heartbroken Kamal stopped waking Mangal. Simultaneously furious and disheartened she retraced her steps, childishly kicking her feet. Muttering incomprehensible nuances, she laid her bed without so much as glancing at Baba. “There is no necessity to play the flute. I have already heard the buzzing of the bee. It is time for You to leave. You undergo immense trouble for my sake. You come here to delightedly conduct the flute programme but I initiate some such topic and plague You unduly. Pose problems for You. Forgive me,” she said glumly. Concluding her compliment cum apology she lay down on her mattress as tears helplessly flowed in an unending stream.

Baba watched for a space then going over to Kamal said, “Up, get up, this is not the time for sleeping. So much anger is not good. How can I explain it to you? This kafni cannot be seen by anyone. Even the God’s and Goddesses are not granted it’s sight. It’s darshan is rare and difficult even for them to attain also,” offered Baba consolingly.

“Forget it. Let it be. Thousands of people come to Puttaparthi and You Yourself visit other towns and cities. Haven’t those people ever seen Your kafni? We came to Puttaparthi and did we not see Your kafni? And You are saying that it’s darshan is rare for the Gods! Poor Mangal, she could not visit Puttaparthi but how eager she is for Your darshan. I thought if not You then at

least Your kafni. How rapturously joyous she would have been. However, Your kafni's tale is curious indeed," replied a disgruntled Kamal sarcastically.

"It is not so. Kamal I'm telling you the truth, believe Me. The kafni which you saw at Puttaparthi with the others, the one visible to everyone all the time, is a different kafni altogether and this one a different one. Today is a special occasion, Diwali and you were intending to do My aarthi, which is why I wore it. I desired to show it to you and so I put it on. But only because I was visiting your house. It is not for exhibiting to others. The tremendous, good fortune of viewing this kafni will not be offered to anyone. This is indisputably assured. I do not care even if, owing to this difference of opinion, our relationship breaks up. Even then I'll not show this kafni to anyone," vowed Baba.

"If that is Your wish, so be it. You may go, dissolve the bond," countered Kamal swiftly.

Acknowledging it with an angry "Alright then" Baba, backing out spirit like, passed through the wall and disappeared from view. Kamal equally enraged, lay down. Shortly, Kamal became aware of the harmonious melody coming from the flute. Rising, she searchingly looked around, but Baba was nowhere to be seen. Yet the strains continued unabated. However, Kamal's former state altered, her rage evaporated leaving her wholly peaceful as she became immersed, submerged in and lost in those alluring lyrical tones. In a unique oblivion she forgot herself, her anger and the world. At this point Baba manifested.

"Only a short while ago you stated, 'Go away, break the bond, do not play the flute'. Therefore, why now on hearing the flute have you become so calm and enraptured by it? Where has all your fury fled to?" He asked.

"The anger is still where it is supposed to be," retorted Kamal.

"Kamal whilst you were listening to the murali your entire consciousness was absorbed in that alone and not an iota of rage remained. You develop this state within every human being and show it to Me! Only the one whose internal state can become so can expect these auspiciously precious and rare things. Then he too will receive this grace, the same experiences. What I reveal to you I'll show him also," promised Baba.

Since the murali had already been played Baba disappeared after explaining the above to Kamal.

CHAPTER 8

March 1980

A few days prior to this particular exchange Baba had entertained Kamal to the darshans of numerous Gods, Goddesses and deities. On Kamal's enquiry as to the purpose of these revelations Baba, promising to explain later, departed. Today however, Kamal decided to query Baba about this matter. Therefore, immediately on Baba's arrival at midnight Kamal, taking charansparsh, earnestly raised the topic to which Baba replied with the question, "You have been blessed with the darshans of so many Gods and Goddesses. Have you achieved purantha now?"

"How should I know? I am so ignorant how can I tell? That is Your responsibility. What is Your opinion? Whatever You say, so it will be," replied Kamal.

"It is My understanding that you have achieved purantha," said Baba.

"How? By merely having darshans of Gods and Goddesses can purantha occur? I do not think so," responded Kamal sceptically.

"Only now you said that you are quite ignorant. So why are you asking these questions now? You also went so far as to state that My pronunciation would be right. Then why are you casting doubts on My decision?" retorted Baba.

"I am not doubting but I am well aware of the meaning implied by the term purantha and am therefore asking whether it can be attained simply through the darshans of countless Gods and Goddesses. At those times You never stated that 'Your purantha has been achieved'. So why are You saying it now? Baba mercifully please explain to me properly. What You have indicated is not incorrect but due to my total ignorance I cannot comprehend it. Tell me, pray enlighten me," she implored.

"Listen, previously all the darshans conferred were in the nature of a picture but the ones you experienced recently were shakshatkar, real. Did you not notice any difference between them?" asked Baba.

"I never realised anything. To me even the former darshans appeared absolutely real. I believed that You granted the darshans just as I wished them to be," she replied innocently.

"Yes, that is entirely true. I gave you the darshans which you wanted, and which seemed real to you. Nevertheless, until today all the other darshans were in the form of a photograph or cinema screen. But the darshans you had a few days ago were genuine and totally different," explained Baba.

“Baba in order for me to tell the difference will You please leave now and return in ten minutes granting the photograph darshan. Only then will I be capable of differentiating between the two. I desire to understand the difference through my own experience,” said Kamal.

Baba left, returning after the allotted ten minutes. However, now He appeared akin to a picture hung upon the wall even though all the actions sitting, moving, walking etc were taking place. Notwithstanding, it gave the impression of a film. But how was she to talk with this picture Baba? Should she speak or not? She could not decide. But despite the incongruity of the situation, she determined to try, “Baba what is this separate darshan? This looks like a proper photograph to me. It appears just like all the other pictures on the wall,” she said.

“Tell me can the other photographs hung on the wall here speak with you?” asked Baba.

“Yes, why not?” replied Kamal indignantly. “If one has love and close friendship towards them, why shouldn’t they speak?”

“Alright then, why don’t you talk to the Ganapati calendar you have hanging on the wall. Whatever you wish to ask, ask him,” advised Baba.

Now Kamal was left with no alternative but to follow Baba’s instructions! An attempt ought to be made, she decided, the result being Baba’s responsibility. For ten minutes Kamal sat prayerfully before the Ganapati photograph, then after singing a bhajan, she began to speak, “Hey Gajanana, for the past five years this Baba has been visiting my house. He talks to me and takes me to various places. People insist that He is an avatar of God, that He is Your, Ganesh’s avatar! Also, that this Sathya Sai Baba has descended on the earth! Now You please tell me is this true or untrue? What is the real truth?” asked Kamal. She repeated her question three to four times without success. Slowly tears of anger and frustration flowed from her eyes as she tried again, “Hey Ganesh, pray be merciful and reply. You will have to speak otherwise I’ll do something to myself,” threatened Kamal. “Only tell me this much, whether this avatar of Baba’s, God’s avatar, is true or not?”

“For the past many days you have been singing Baba’s bhajans, loving Him and been utterly devoted to Him and yet you are still not aware as to whether He is true or untrue?” asked Ganeshji incredulously.

“I know that He is God. However, why do people call Him false? When I went to Puttaparthi I noticed that people came from the four corners of the earth for His darshan and waited hours to touch His lotus feet. Having discarded their work, they spend days there to be in the presence of the Lord. Notwithstanding this, the people who actually live in that village do not come for darshan, they do not have any belief in Baba! Why are they so ignorant? Why don’t they have any faith in Baba’s power?” she asked.

“What you have said is not entirely true. Recollect that when God in the Krishna avatar carried out a leela or divine supernatural act, at that time it was only the gopikas who could

understand and cognise its divine and Godly nature. It was only they who adoringly offered their complete love to God. And when Krishna visited their homes only the Gopis could see him, the gopas could perceive nothing. Why did this happen? Because to visualise God, to be blessed with these pratyaksh darshans a devoted attitude, bhakthi, love and a pure intellect and heart are essential. In the Krishna avatar thousands saw him but how many of those actually realised his divinity? Now in this avatar to the villagers and the other close residents Baba appears to be an ordinary mortal. Baba, having been born in Puttaparthi they have witnessed His childhood pranks and Bal Leela. Having seen His everyday actions with their own eyes, having seen Him grow up before them, they assume Him to be an ordinary human being. They believe that like the other four children this child also grew up gradually, normally. Having been continuously exposed to Baba's presence and sight they are unable to discern anything unusual or peculiar in Him. Even were someone to attempt to enlighten these ignorant folk, it would have no effect for they would fail to see Baba's splendor and majesty. You remember that abhang do you not?

Tuje aahe tujpashi pari tu jaga chukalasi
Everything is with you; only you are searching for it in the
wrong place.
Karvet kalsa aani gavala valsa
A child under your arm yet you are looking around the village for him.

That is the condition of these people. They are always searching for shortcomings and errors in Baba. 'Why is this so, why that?' Such doubts will always arise in their minds," replied Ganeshji explaining at length.

"This implies that you firmly believe Baba to be truly God. You have said the truth, have you not?" asked Kamal.

"Why are you constantly reiterating whether it is true or untrue? He is the very embodiment of truth. Even His name is Sathya Sai Baba," replied Ganapati exasperated at Kamal's inferences.

"I do not refer to Him as 'Sai Baba'," responded Kamal bent on splitting hairs.

"Then what do you call Him?" asked Ganeshji interestedly.

"I call Him simply 'Baba'. The eldest member in any household is always called 'Baba'. When there are three or four children in a home the oldest is generally referred to as 'Dada'. In the same way the oldest person is respectfully called. Baba'. Anna Maharaj also calls Him Baba. Whoever is Anna Maharaj's Baba is also my Baba! But returning to the point in question, if you truly wish to know I'm still not quite convinced that Baba is an avatar. My belief and feeling is not yet unshakable that Baba is truly God like Sri Ram and Sri Krishna were," she ended.

"So why do you do His bhajan and puja? Why have you got all these photographs of Baba in the house?" pointed out Ganeshji.

“I will not tell you, instead you tell me. You reveal to me why I have hung up all these photographs? Why I began bhajans and at whose instigation they were initiated. You may perhaps disbelieve what I say. I wish to see if what you say appears right to me or not?” said Kamal.

“Accha, I’ll tell you everything but first you tell me this, with whom did you go to Puttaparthi to see Baba?” he asked deliberately countering her query.

“With my guru,” replied Kamal immediately.

“At that time didn’t you have any desire to see Baba,” he asked.

“The yearning was there because Anna Maharaj had informed me that God’s avatar had taken place and therefore, I was eagerly impatient to see Him. Nevertheless, had Anna Maharaj not taken me I could never have had the opportunity for His darshan. I had no hope or expectation of it,” replied Kamal honestly.

“How did you feel after going there?” Ganeshji asked next.

“Anna Maharaj said that Baba confers personal darshan on many persons, so I decided that I too wished to see whether He was a sant or bhagvant? I had not been given proof of these things, had I? Even though I’d heard hundreds of stories that He had great supernatural powers and was a ‘siddha purusha’. Hence my urge for darshan. Actually, to tell the truth, it was Anna Maharaj’s dearest wish that all his disciples be granted darshan. Since this was Anna Maharaj’s particular desire it was also mine,” she concluded happily.

“If that was the case what necessity was there to sacrifice food and drink until darshan was granted? Why this intense yearning and thirst for darshan?” probed Ganapati.

“To ensure that my sadguru’s words were not contemptuously disregarded. On my being granted darshan Anna Maharaj would have derived immense bliss and my ananda is submerged in his,” she said feelingly.

“This is all regarding darshan, now why after returning home did you commence bhajans at your house?” he asked.

“That was also because Anna Maharaj told me to. He offered me a photograph whilst advising me that it is good to conduct bhajan and puja in a house for it ensures a sanctified atmosphere and eventually leads to salvation. Also, mainly because it is especially congenial, good and beneficial for women, that’s why!” she ended triumphantly.

“Do you receive ananda from bhajans or do you sing them merely as a pleasant pastime or force of habit? You do not sing them simply for recreation, do you?” asked an amused Ganapati.

“No, not for recreation. In fact, I soon began to gain great joy from them, which intensified to so great a degree that Baba manifested vibhuti balls for me and showed me numerous miracles. All this began to happen unexpectedly. I do not even possess the intelligence to understand why I

started doing bhajan and why I continue with it. Actually, I fail to properly comprehend as to how and why my progress rapidly increased due to bhajans. It was simply my job to inform Anna Maharaj of all that happened, all the miracles that took place, that is all. I had no real expectations for such wonderful happenings. After these momentous events Anna Maharaj gradually began attending bhajans here on Thursdays. It was due to Anna Maharaj's coming, and my being afforded the opportunity, the happiness of being in his close company and of doing his worship that my faith and trust in Baba increased enormously. It appeared especially miraculous to me that out of eight days Anna Maharaj would spend one hour in my house. So, I did bhajan with even more pleasure and fervour. But what is this?" she asked surprised. "I wanted you to tell me everything and instead you have got all the information from my own lips themselves," she ended.

"Never mind, I'll just ask you a few more questions first. Yes, now tell me, if Anna Maharaj were to stop attending the bhajans would you then cease the bhajan programme?" he asked before she could raise any further protest.

"No, of course not. I will not stop it. Since Anna Maharaj has categorically stated that it should be done, then I'll never cease it on any account. But perhaps it may not be carried out with so much love. When Anna Maharaj attends a uniquely peculiar type of bliss is felt," she said carefully.

"This means that you love only Anna Maharaj and not Baba," declared Ganeshji.

"No, that is not the case at all. Since Anna Maharaj himself taught me to love Baba, I do love Baba too. How can I not love Baba? It can never be," she stated emphatically.

Suddenly Kamal realised that she had been quite happily conversing away with the Ganesh calendar all this time. When this exchange commenced Baba had been present in the form of a picture. But during all this time she had completely forgotten about Him. Only now did she begin to seek Him. Baba instantly manifested and the Ganesh calendar resumed its former place, assuming its photographic appearance.

Turning to Baba she said, "Baba You asked, did You not, how a photograph or picture could possibly talk? Now explain to me how did all this take place for so long? This drama was all Yours, was it not? You only did it for my sake. What was the need for it all? You are the initiator and the one who gets the task done. Everything I speak and do is spoken and carried out by You. Therefore, why use me as an intermediary?" asked Kamal.

"Because without an intermediary the play is no longer amusing. You have read the Ramayana, so tell Me had Maruti and Ravana been excluded how could it have been made? Similarly, to prepare this Ramayana you are essential. What can I do alone? Accha, now sit here while I just visit around the house," enjoined Baba mysteriously.

In the kitchen Baba discovered a few peanuts which He brought back with Him. Baba asked Kamal to pick them up one at a time from His hand and place them in her own. As Kamal

followed these instructions each and every peanut miraculously transformed into one of Jnaneshwar Maharaj's abhangs. Her astonishment was matched only by her jubilation. So much so that she happily sat holding the precious slokas in her hand, in no way prepared to hand them back to Baba. The fact that they were Jnaneshwar Maharaj's slokas only added to her ananda and bliss. However, Baba repeatedly began to ask for the return of the slokas.

Kamal, refusing, proceeded to argue the point, "Baba You have Yourself given the slokas into my hand therefore they have become mine and I will not return them. What will You do with them? You are all knowing so You are not going to contemplate on them! These slokas are usually for disciples and so they are for me. Even if I make some more, I'll be keeping them. I have no intention of giving them to You," she replied with conviction.

"Accha, I'll return them to you and even make more for you but at this moment now you have to give them to Me. The reason being that tomorrow we will be visiting Tirupati Balaji where we will do worship with two of the slokas. After that I'll give you all the remaining slokas," promised Baba.

Thus, easily persuaded Kamal consented to this proposal placing all the slokas into Baba's hands. Immediately on contact they transformed into flowers. Seeing this Kamal became greatly upset at the thought that how could Balaji's puja be carried out now? They would have to offer mere flowers, she thought angrily. Soon she was intrigued by a flashing supposition, 'Would the flowers transform into slokas if she took them into her hands again or not?' This theory should be tested. But the flowers remained flowers.

"What is this contrariness You are doing? I want the slokas. What will I do with these flowers?" she said furiously.

"What can I do?" replied Baba innocently. "When you placed them in My hand they turned into flowers. I did not do anything. Never mind, you may offer all these flowers to the moorthis of your deities, and to the photographs and the padukas."

"There will be no need for that," said Kamal, her already roused temper flaring. "The God of Gods and the supreme God is You, is it not? Here, take them, I offer them all to You," she ended sarcastically as she furiously flung them over Baba from a distance.

Instantaneously they all changed, as a shower of slokas rained and settled around Baba. Amazed, a smile lit her face as Kamal gaily ran to pick them up. Her joy was short lived as she no sooner took a couple of steps than they immediately reverted back to the undesirable flowers.

"What is all this taking place?" she asked, confused. "Is this the sign of my purantha? What kind of purantha? And then there is You! You have nothing else to do apart from tease and irritate me! It seems my fate is broken," she mourned wrathfully.

"No, no, come a few steps closer and you will receive the flowers which are between us as slokas," promised Baba.

The subsequent events proved even more wondrous. Poor Kamal, following Baba's advice advanced slowly steadily, hawkishly eyeing the flowers. As she bent to retrieve them, they miraculously flew up one on top of the other to form a beautiful garland. Declining to take it Kamal stared at Baba fiercely. Baba laughed sweetly raising His shoulders. His expression and attitude conveying the message 'What can I do?'

"Look, see how lovely the flowers are. You love flowers. The garland is excellently made. You yourself say that you adore flower garlands. Why don't you take it now? Come, pick up the garland," said Baba pleasantly. "Accha if you lift the garland, you will find the slokas hidden beneath it. If you don't how will you get it?" He asked.

As Kamal lifted the garland the central and largest flower transformed into a sloka. Kamal's swiftly fluctuating emotions tipped the scales of exultation. 'This lovely garland should be offered to someone,' she thought.

Cognising her purpose Baba proposed, "You may place this garland on whoever you choose. You possess so many photographs of Gods and Goddesses, offer it to one of those."

To Kamal this suggestion appeared similar to the flower and sloka play. Unaware of Baba's intentions she disregarded His proposal. Instead, approaching Baba she placed the garland around His neck. Once again, they changed becoming a garland of slokas. Kamal's hands automatically moved to repossess the desired garland.

"Initially you decided that since the slokas were formed in your hands they therefore belonged to you. Well, these slokas were made on contact with Me and so they are Mine! How can you take them? However, were I to voluntarily give them to you it's a different matter. But I will not give them with My own hands. If you so wish you may come and take them yourself. Do not fear, they will not transform into flowers. They will remain slokas. Come, take them," invited Baba.

Suddenly a woman devotee from Puttaparthi stood beside Baba. Kamal had noticed her presence but had not deigned to ask Baba the reason, necessity or importance for her appearance. Her entire attention was focused on the garland. Somehow, she had to regain its possession. Extending both hands she caught hold of the garland attempting its removal from around Baba's neck. But the garland appeared to be stuck fast, obstinately refusing to yield. Helpless, Kamal was reduced to tears.

"Now send for your Anna Maharaj. Perhaps the garland will come off then. If you desire to fulfil your wish for the garland then you must call him, for otherwise the garland will definitely not move," offering this advice Baba disappeared.

"Asking me to call Anna Maharaj why have You vanished Yourself? What game is all this?" she asked exasperated by now.

On Baba's disappearance the garland was still visible lying on the floor, but it was firmly attached, defying Kama's efforts to lift it. At this Anna Maharaj appeared. Even so, despite his coming the garland stayed stuck fast. 'Perhaps if Baba was present, shakshatkar, the garland would move! Also had Baba been present Anna Maharaj could have expressed his wish for the garland personally.' Caught between these conflicting deliberations Kamal found it impossible to decide on a definite solution. Kamal's increasing dejection stemmed from the fact that the slokas were not in her possession. In addition, now she was becoming aggressively aggrieved at the nature of this purantha of hers. 'Why has Baba insinuated this new item into my mind? To establish the purity of gold it is tested on the touchstone only once. But Baba is continuously and repeatedly testing me again and again. No matter how difficult the examination it should be conducted once only. To be constantly cast into these dilemmas my mind becomes wavering and unsettled. My equilibrium is shattered into thousands of fragments and my peace is utterly destroyed,' she thought. Tired and defeated, helpless, she placed her head on Anna Maharaj's feet, weeping.

"Anna what is this you have done? You placed me at Baba's feet, now see how He uses me! As from today I never ever want to see Him again!" she wailed. "Not even once! For information's sake He has conferred numerous experiences upon me, but all His transactions are secretive and undercover ones! All cunning tricks and deceit, nothing else! Sometimes expounding one thing and at other times another. My poor brain is benumbed by it all. Right up till today He has not once peaceably sat down and imparted spiritual instruction, taught me anything good or revealed the correct path to me. He has no intention of ever accomplishing my salvation. From today I'll never take His darshan," she ended. All this was sobbed at Anna Maharaj's feet. Now desirous of looking upon his face Kamal raised her head stunned to discover Baba instead. Infuriated she snapped sharply, "Are You back again? Why didn't You come when Anna Maharaj was here? Again, the secret stealthiness has begun!"

"No, we will not come together! That's it, I've said it! When Anna Maharaj comes, I will not come and when I am here then he will not appear," replied Baba.

"What have You decided with regard to the garland?" asked Kamal.

"What would happen if I refused to give it you?" replied Baba.

"What will happen? Nothing will happen! Anna Maharaj knows all those slokas. He will recite and I will write them down and then learn them off by heart. There is no need for You to exhibit so much self importance," said Kamal stiffly.

"Accha, you'll write them down? And learn them off by heart? So, Anna Maharaj remembers all the slokas? Go ask him right now," replied Baba with assumed affability.

"Just now you stated that Anna Maharaj will not come whilst You are here, that the darshan of both together will not be granted. What is all this? My intellect is not functioning," said Kamal, by now utterly confused by Baba's apparent contradictions. Going down on her

knees she sat looking at His feet, hands folded in prayerful surrender as her mind gradually regained some of its composure. “Baba, pray tell me the absolute truth as to why I cannot have darshan of both of You together? Formerly when darshan of you two together was conferred it was at Your will. It affords me immense contentment to see You both together,” she stated.

Baba looked at Kamal with love filled eyes and placing His hand on her head replied, “Pagali, I have explained to you so many times, but your ignorance just does not go. Listen, now listen very carefully. You are convinced that when Baba disappears Anna Maharaj manifests and when Anna Maharaj vanishes Baba appears. Why do you not realise the essence is that when you meet Baba you have also met Anna and when you have darshan of Anna it is Baba’s darshan too?” He said expounding the unity of divinity in the simplest terms possible.

“Leave it, leave it! Until today this is the only philosophy You have taught me. ‘Both are one’ is what You wish to tell me, is it not? I’m well aware of it. Now explain to me if there truly isn’t any difference between the two of You why did You say, ‘Call Anna Maharaj for only on his arrival will the garland be released?’ Why did You say this? Who introduced the distinction? If You and Anna are one, why didn’t You free the garland for me? Why did You compel me to call upon Anna,” argued Kamal.

“Actually, the fact is that you place more faith and trust in Anna. You have more love towards him,” replied Baba adding fuel to the already flaming rage.

“That’s enough! You have finally brought me back to square one. On the one hand You insist that I should understand and believe that when I see Anna Maharaj, I also see You and yet at the same time You accuse me of having more love towards Anna Maharaj! Having first explained correctly You then present a contradiction before me. You expound the theory of the unity of the two whilst, the very next instant You display them as separate. I have reached the limit with these confusing rounds of ‘One and two’ of Yours. Firstly, I am an uneducated villager and ignorant, and on top of that You add this problematical philosophy of Yours. I’ll become mad. Most definitely, absolutely mad! With what You are doing all Your devotees will fail and flounder. All those who are following You will be drowned in a sea of ignorance. They will all attain to the further reaches of hell! Not one will remain. Then You will be left all alone! Entirely alone! There will be no one with you,” finished Kamal exhausted by her tirade.

Baba immediately about faced, turning His back on Kamal, He burst out laughing uproariously. Kamal already fuming now became livid with rage. “Why don’t You show Your face? Turn Your face this way and finish this conversation properly. Up till today what salvation for which devotee have You accomplished? Answer me! Why, will You spend Your whole life teaching only this ‘One and two’ business? Will You always be instructing that ‘When you worship Me you should believe it to be the worship of your chosen deity and when you worship your chosen deity it will be accounted as My worship’. Apart from this do You have any further knowledge to teach? No devotee will ever go beyond this ‘One and two’ affair! No one will be able to progress! Why, is it to impart only this one principle that You have taken so great and magnificent an avatar? It seems to me that saints like Jnaneshwar, Tukaram, Namadev and

Eknath are far superior to You. Your entire play appears artificial and affected to me. Instead of liberating me You are entangling me in the coils of ignorance and delusion. I am so securely bound that it is difficult to get free. If You study the religious texts of Jnaneshwar and Tukaram You will realise that each and every word imparts spiritual instruction and philosophy. If You take my advice, You will sit down and write some enlightening spiritual text Yourself. However, if You have no inclination to teach then narrate the life story of some saint,” she concluded angrily.

Baba turned and facing Kamal continued laughing, “Oh pagal, you are truly pagal! I informed you right at the beginning that your purantha is coming about and you persist in saying that I have not revealed any wisdom to you, haven’t affected your salvation or endowed you with intellect and discrimination? Tell me one thing, sometimes when you hear the flute you are asleep, nevertheless you get up forgetting everything else. At that time what are your feelings?” asked Baba.

“Nothing, nothing in particular. The fact that I am blessed with the opportunity to hear the flute is treated as a matter of some significance by people. To me the tones sound as if someone were gently beating a light tapping on a vessel with a stick. Now there is no necessity for the flute music so You can cease that programme as from today. In fact, nothing else is necessary either,” replied Kamal.

“As you wish but remember one thing, if I leave today, you will never again have darshan of Anna Maharaj. Absolutely not!” declared Baba in a tone of finality.

At this declaration Kamal lost all her capabilities. Her mental processes ceased to function. Her throat dried up as her tongue adhered to the roof of her mouth. Petrified by this threat she fell unconscious to the ground. Ten long minutes crept by. Finally, Baba relented and sweeping His hand across her face brought her round and helped her to sit up.

“Baba pray be merciful to me. I’m asking this from the bottom of my heart, please answer me. What You have said about my ‘purantha’ coming about. What is it? What sort of purantha? What is referred to as ‘purantha’? How are you affecting it? Please tell me,” She implored.

“From among all the avatars that have incarnated so far this avatar of Mine is the most important and superior. The work which I must accomplish I most certainly will carry out. No one can hinder Me! I will complete all My avataric tasks before leaving! Firstly, you tell Me why you dislike Me? On the one hand you engage in My bhajan and puja but on the other you display an excessive degree of contemptuous disrespect,” said Baba.

“You are always foremost in changing the subject! First answer the questions I have asked. What You have said about my disliking You is not true. Nevertheless, tell me, have You till today effected my advancement? Caused my salvation? And have You ever done these things for anyone else?” asked Kamal undeterred and refusing to be sidetracked.

“To this day I have delivered many devotees, in this avatar itself! However, what I am doing and what yet remains to be done with regard to you is known only to Myself. You do not possess the intelligence to comprehend it. The amount of knowledge and intellect I have conferred upon you is known only to Me. No matter how thorough and in depth an explanation I offer it will be beyond your understanding,” replied Baba seriously, “because there is still a great deal of ignorance latent in you,” He concluded.

“But You are all powerful so why don’t You remove this veil of ignorance? Baba pray be merciful to me and lift this heavy curtain of unwisdom,” she beseeched.

“To remove your or anyone else’s ignorance is entirely dependent on My will. Only when the appropriate time arrives, I will take away your ignorance. Not at your will but Mine. I prefer your unwise state. It is particularly pleasing to Me. For me it is a novelty. Children think that ‘Why does not my mother feed me more food so that I can grow up quickly?’ But the mother is fully aware of exactly how much they should be fed. Then again, the mother derives a peculiarly unique joy in her child’s lisping speech, its play, its tears of love and its invariable habit of disturbing and upsetting her. The mother revels in her child’s precious childhood with loving pleasure. It is her right. Similarly, you are My ignorant child. I will keep you in ignorance. If you become wise you will grow up far too quickly. I do not wish it. I am not implying that I will always keep you in ignorance, by no means so. For as you grow in spiritual stature your wisdom will increase accordingly. Only I will not forcibly make you wise now. Whilst I am in this avatar your veil of ignorance will not be removed. That is your ‘purantha’ and you should live blissfully happy in that knowledge,” concluded Baba.

CHAPTER 9

23rd July 1980

Owing to an unusually large number of household chores Kamal was unable to carry out her regular worship of the padukas. In fact, it was very late and when she suddenly remembered. She summarily dropped the work at hand and proceeded to do puja. Kamal performed the puja as per her usual practice. Nevertheless, she was left with the distinct impression that a certain ritual had been omitted, the puja being incomplete. She performed the puja again but was still dissatisfied, her mind not fully content. After deliberating for long she finally collected all the puja articles and replaced them in their respective places. However, an insistent sharp probe stabbed internally within her mind reiterating that the puja had not been properly executed. Kamal gathered all the puja items and again carried out the worship for the third time. She was greatly perturbed at what was happening for it was totally beyond her comprehension. In addition, she was concerned at the reaction of others to her actions. Nevertheless, it was an undeniable fact that today her mind was unfulfilled, and she failed to derive any contentment despite having conducted the puja thrice.

As Kamal prepared the daily curry seated on a stool in the kitchen her gaze inadvertantly dropped to the bottom of the stool where lay a letter! Kamal quickly picked it up and opening it read 'You insult Me! This is unacceptable to your guru even which is why you are not gaining any joy from his worship. You are to think carefully about this matter'. Deeply saddened by this information, she deliberated for long without arriving at any satisfactory conclusion. Therefore, Kamal decided to seek advice and possibly a solution to this problem from Anna Maharaj himself. Having so decided it became of paramount importance to attend the ashram. Hurridly completeing the luncheon duty she prepared to leave. But no sooner did she place one foot beyond the doorstep than her other foot, within the lintel, was clasped by an unknown power with such immense strength and force that she was unable to move. Desperately she attempted to free herself. She was so impatient to reach Anna Maharaj that this postponement and delay caused her distress to the degree that it was extremely difficult to bear with. But there was nothing she could do. She stood in that position, one foot outside and one foot within for over ten minutes. Totally helpless, she eventually shelved the projected visit to Anna Maharaj. Immediately her foot was released. Retrieving her foot from outside Kamal went towards the kitchen. Standing there she prayed to Baba that she be allowed to visit Anna Maharaj. Her prayers were of no avail as once again her foot stuck fast to the ground. She realised that it was not Baba's wish, and without His will she could accomplish nothing. Eventually she decided to relinquish her intention of visiting Anna Maharaj. So, occupying herself with household tasks she forgot all about it.

Kamal elected to finish a job which required considerable time, that of winnowing rice. Collecting a container of rice, a pan, a winnowing basket and an empty bowl she went outside to sit beside the tulsi bush in the courtyard. She had only succeeded in winnowing a handful of rice when it flashed across her mind that since she was now already out of the house who could stop her. Briskly she closed the container and placing the bowl over the pan set off. But once again the

same condition prevailed, one foot in front and one behind both firmly adhering to the ground. In particular the foot behind felt as if strongly grasped by someone. Kamal was extremely concerned that someone would see her in this awkward position, what would they think? Therefore, she mentally entreated Baba vowing to give up her resolve to visit Anna Maharaj, begging pardon for her error. Instantly her foot was released. Discarding the rice Kamal went to the back of the house to select and replenish the wood for the kitchen fire. Returning with a small quantity of firewood she sat down before the stove. 'Baba whatever You wish to do, do it now for at four o'clock I must attend the discourse at the ashram. Please fulfill this one wish of mine for I am well aware that I cannot do anything outside of Your will. Only please do not break my rule of listening to the discourse,' she supplicated within herself.

In accordance with her usual practice Kamal set off towards the ashram at four o'clock. On reaching the Mandir her happiness grew for now she would definitely have the opportunity of speaking to Anna Maharaj after his discourse. The reading, lecture, tirth prasad and darshan were all concluded, and Anna Maharaj retired to his room. Kamal taking darshan of Anna Maharaj's padukas also turned towards Anna Maharaj's room. However, no sooner did she set foot on the first step than the previous opposition made itself apparent. One foot above and one below both firmly attached to their respective places. When she renounced the notion of climbing the stairs her feet were immediately set free. After encircling the mandir, when Kamal attempted to approach the stairway, her feet would be rooted to the spot. After three to four such attempts Kamal finally returned home tired, helpless, irritated and very angry. So much so that tears fell unendingly from her eyes in frustration. In this querulous and dejected state, she sat on the kitchen stool. 'Baba this play of Yours is not to my liking. I cannot even tell you how enraged I am,' she said whilst crying her heart out.

At seven thirty that evening her husband and children expressed the desire for their evening meal and Kamal became involved in this time-consuming duty till nine thirty, by which time everyone had been satisfactorily served. In preparation for retiring, they all went outside while Kamal somehow managed to tidy up afterwards. Then she sat before the fire, deep in thought. At this a bee appeared and buzzing furiously it flew beneath the stool, whilst encircling it a few times. On hearing that familiar sound the morning's events resurfaced in her mind inciting her into a fiery rage. Jumping up she placed the stool against the wall. The bumble bee was visible circling low on the floor, buzzing loudly. Kamal decided to capture it and throw it outside. Naturally it was not a simple task. Initially it evaded her. However, when she did capture it, it suddenly became so heavy that it was impossible to lift even with both hands. Her next course of action was to try and remove it with the aid of a small iron ladle, but it refused to budge even an inch either way. Kamal's seething rage exploded. She neither thought of nor considered the consequences but hastily utilising a blowpipe bellows she beat the poor bee three to four times with force. Blood oozed from its body as it lay senseless writhing in pain. Witnessing its tortured state Kamal's temper cooled as her anger dispersed like mist. Full of contrition she repented, crying as she berated herself. Tenderly lifting the bee, she wiped its blood with her sari paloo. No matter how much she cleansed it the flow continued unabated! Her astonishment grew. How

could so small a bee possibly have so much blood in its tiny body? Somehow the flow had to be halted, but how? What should be done? She could not understand. In the end she applied a handful of ashes from the fire to the bee's wounds. Instantaneously the blood ceased to flow. Not only that, but it also completely vanished! The ashes assumed the appearance of vibhuti as its fragrance wafted over her entire kitchen. The bee's incessant buzzing recommenced. At this, for some unknown reason, Kamal's anger re-erupted and she attempted to enclose the bee in her hands. However, on every occasion it would manage to escape and a shower of vibhuti would manifest. Whizzing around, the Lord masquerading as a bumble bee flew around the stool and as Kamal made another futile attempt to capture it the stool fell heavily on her hand. Her hand was trapped beneath the stool's unbelievably weighty load of what felt like eighty kilos. When Kamal pulled or tugged for the release of her hand, incredibly the weight increased stupendously, and the severe shooting pains became impossible to withstand. Acknowledging her error, she surrendered wholly, seeking refuge at His feet.

"Baba this is difficult to bear. Please save me and help me to get free. At this time, I do not want this bumble bee darshan of Yours. Pray be merciful and grant sakshatkar darshan and confer peace on my mind," she implored.

In response to this prayerful entreaty her hand was instantly freed. The camouflaged Baba came and seated Himself on the stool. But at this time Kamal felt an intense desire for pratyaksh darshan and so she beseeched Baba. At this a voice emerged from beneath the stool.

"Look Kamal, you must understand that you cannot do anything beyond My will. Since this morning the one who prevented you from going to Anna Maharaj was Myself and the one who created the eager desire to go was also Myself," stated the bumble bee form of the Lord.

Kamal was not unaware of this but why did it happen? She failed to resolve the puzzle. Accepting this as Baba's will she maintained her silence, folding her hands in an attitude of prayer she continued pleading for pratyaksh darshan. Ultimately Baba manifested. Seating Baba on the stool she prayed for an answer to this contrary situation.

"Kamal, you place more faith in your guru, have more love towards him and respect and honour him more. You attach no value to Me at all. This I thoroughly disapprove of," said Baba.

"Up till today You must have instructed me a thousand times that You and Anna are one therefore why are You speaking thus today?" questioned Kamal. "Now You tell me, are You not present in Anna Maharaj?"

"That is quite true, I am. However, you decide for yourself, on bhajan days we are both visible to you seated on the same couch. First you do Anna Maharaj's puja with concentrated effort, peace and correctly. When it is My turn, you rush through hoping to finish quickly and in the process sometimes applying haldi and omitting kumkum or presenting flowers but

forgetting the vibhuti. What! Is this a proper puja? With both of us present all your attention is focused on Anna Maharaj. You do not have a moment to spare for Me,” complained Baba.

“In my opinion whatever I am doing is right, because it was Anna Maharaj who revealed the spiritual path to me. It was him who set me on the highway to You. He is my guru, and it is a guru’s duty to do this. I am a disciple therefore I must fulfill the obligations incumbent upon a disciple. That is why when I conduct his puja with all my heart it is also accounted as Your puja. I believe that Your puja is contained and completed in Anna Maharaj’s puja. You should accept this view for in my eyes all Gods are one,” concluded Kamal reciting her well learned lesson perfectly.

Clapping His approval Baba said, “Bravo, well done.” But Kamal remained just as perplexed by Baba’s contrary questioning as previously He had always insisted ‘We are both one and so there is no difference between us’.

“Baba why are You today viewing things with this duality? Why are You trying to distract my mind?” she queried.

“Sometimes why don’t you examine your own actions. Everyday you worship the padukas with love, delight and great pleasure. After this you worship Anna Maharaj’s photograph. My photograph also hangs there. Have you ever worshipped My photograph with as much love? Tell Me why do you practise this discrimination?” asked Baba in return.

“Baba this notion has never entered my reasonings so why are You today trying to implant this difference into my mind?” she asked. “Go now I will never ever worship You again and I have no desire for Your darshan anymore either. All You ever do is play games all the time. People consider me fortunate in having been blessed with Baba’s darshan. They say that I am being liberated. What sort of fortune is this? What type of salvation? You constantly speak in riddles turning everything upside down and inside out, shattering my mind into a thousand fragments, not allowing me to arrive at any conclusion. I have no need for Your darshan or such salvation,” she ended bitterly.

“Why are you so angry? I was only joking a little!” replied an amused Baba.

“Every time it is harmless fun for You but for me it is my life going. From today I will never call You again and You are not to come to me by force,” stated Kamal.

Baba calmly stood up in preparation for departing. He stood silently for some two minutes then gradually fading He vanished from before Kamal’s sight. At this Kamal’s mind underwent a rapid upheaval ‘Now I will never have Baba’s darshan again,’ she thought. Utterly distracted she supplicated Baba to accept puja for the last time. Returning, Baba stood on the stool. Kamal happily concluded that Baba had accepted her final request. As usual Kamal readied a puja tray and approaching Baba took the all imminent tirth from His holy feet. Then, opening the vibhuti container, with the purpose of applying vibhuti, she dipped her finger into it. Imagine the shock

when her finger was severely burned for now it held live embers in place of vibhuti. Tormented by pain, the container slipped from her grasp. The haldi, kumkum and rice grains yet remained to be applied. Kamal cautiously abstained for this had already taken place and who knew what would happen next? Thinking thus she decided to dispense with the puja altogether. So, blowing on her finger, weeping, she prayed to Anna Maharaj. An hour went by like this, but Anna Maharaj did not yield to her entreaties. Baba calmly observed all this. No one spoke. Kamal sat comforting her poor finger until Baba finally shattered the silence.

“You were never going to call Me! So why did you call and express a wish to worship Me?” He asked. “Give Me a complete explanation of these actions of yours,” He insisted.

“Alright, alright I know everything! Compelled to carry out this kind of puja I wished to entangle You in an awkward situation that is why,” retorted Kamal.

Baba promptly disappeared. Yet enraged Kamal called upon Anna Maharaj. Positive that no one else could protect her from this terrible trouble. She closed her eyes and incessantly prayed and pleaded for her guru. One hour later she opened her eyes to find Baba before her. Thoroughly furious now she said, “Anna, have you also become hard hearted and unyielding like Baba? For the past one hour I have been calling you; have you no compassion for me? I have been repeatedly hailing you, have you not heard even one of my calls? Now I understand. You are both one, are you not? Since Baba feels no pity for me how can you? It seems you both have joined forces and formed a strategy to use me. Even so I am convinced that you will come and save me,” declared Kamal.

But no such thing happened. Kamal’s rage and sense of grievance grew out of all proportion. In this inexplicable state she flung the contents of the puja tray here, there and everywhere. Baba stood before her but instead of carrying out His worship she extracted all the articles kumkum, rice grains, haldi, bukka and vibhuti from their containers and liberally scattered them over the floor. Then a phenomenal, unusual miracle took place. Just as lightning is produced at the thunderous clashing of clouds, similarly a terribly powerful ball of lightning came and fell behind Baba. Startled Kamal’s eyes widened enormously in awed surprise. The ball radiantly glowed behind Baba emitting intense sharp rays which were difficult to bear with the naked eye. Unable to withstand her inquisitive curiosity she tried to discover what the ‘thing’ was. Slowly, gradually she slid closer. Turning and twisting, she attempted to discover the nature of the alien entity. However, despite her many gyrations, no matter where she turned, she was confronted by Baba’s countenance only. The mysterious luminous ball would hide behind Him. Creeping forward, bobbing her head lower and lower, circling around, she was still met by Baba’s face imitating her movements exactly. In this way they slowly started to go round and round. Soon the speed increased to such an extent that they sped around in circles whirring like wheels in a machine. It became impossible to bear the velocity. What sort of happening was this? It was beyond her understanding. She was powerless to halt it, and it proved impossible to escape from the vicious circle. Kamal, recollecting Anna Maharaj again called out to him. Eventually deigning to look upon Baba Kamal was disconcerted to find that He now supported four hands instead of

two. The two new ones without doubt belonged to Anna Maharaj for his wrists were encircled by his white kurta sleeves and on his finger was Baba's ring whilst the other handheld Baba's bhajanavali book. Kamal was furious that after all her supplications Anna Maharaj had responded by revealing his hands only. She had never dreamt that Anna Maharaj would also play such mischievous pranks like Baba.

Absolutely infuriated, Kamal burst out, "Anna I never imagined that you too would join in this life draining game of Baba's! However, now it appears that you are perhaps two steps ahead of Baba in such matters! I have never been angry with you before, but today I am so enraged that I do not know what to do. Baba what should I say about You? Till today You have granted me the darshans of innumerable Gods and Goddesses, conferred many experiences on me, but none of these struck me as particularly peculiar. Other people believe me to be extremely fortunate that I am a great devotee, and God is pleased with me. But I do not see any proof of it because You continuously present one difficult task after another before me. Having cast me into an impossible situation You delightedly relish the spectacle. When I complain You insist it is just a game, a joke. It may be an enjoyable pastime for You but it fairly annihilates me. Now I have no need of either of you. Today I myself will put a final stop to all this play. I will never again present You with the opportunity to play with me," vowed Kamal angrily.

The whizzing around had long since stopped. Kamal rose stiffly and leaving the kitchen she went within the main house and closing the door firmly behind her she locked it securely. Causally covering her eyes with her right arm, she sneakily peeped out and as there was a large crack in the door, she could clearly see all that was happening. The four-armed Baba/Anna separated. Baba advancing forward stealthily passed His tiny hand through the crack and unlocked the bolt. Both Anna and Baba entered the room seating themselves on either side of Kamal. Anna was smiling whilst Baba, enjoying the situation, laughed with glee for over five minutes after which Anna tried to raise Kamal.

"Look, I have come," he offered.

"Now you have come. There is no need. I am fine as I am, ignorant and foolish. No guru or God can change me, and this Baba. He is the death of me. I believed that being my guru you would help me, save me, but despite my numerous prayers and entreaties you joined forces with Baba and began to play with me. You have also become adamant like Him and even more harsh and unmoveable. Now both of you go from here. I have no need of anything," said Kamal.

"I'm asking you to get up, and you will have to," persisted Anna Maharaj.

"Yes, yes, I am a disciple and therefore I am obliged to listen to and obey your commands. You are my guru and so I have never believed any other power or strength to be greater than you. You are my eminently worshipable dearer than life all supreme guru. Baba is just Baba. He never allows one to know what He will do when. Not even in my dreams had I imagined that there could be a power and force superior to yours. A short while ago I called out to you so many

times, you did not come then. You are beginning to appear exactly like Baba therefore why should I have any love towards you? I will not get up,” she stated firmly.

“I am telling you to arise, so you will have to get up otherwise here and now you will lose your life,” threatened Anna Maharaj.

“Very good, it will be very good indeed,” replied Kamal heroically. “If I die this instant before both of you then my salvation is assured. I have no other desire.” Though verbally resisting, mentally Kamal thought that she should pay heed to their requests as such obstinacy was very wrong. By this time both Anna Maharaj and Baba, commanding a hand each, pulled her into a sitting position.

“You have been here a long time so you can both go now. Never come back here again. I will not call either of you ever,” promised Kamal.

“Accha, we will go but first we will finish something. Write down all that you have just said on a piece of paper so that we have the permanent evidence in our possession,” said Anna Maharaj. “When husband and wife decide to divorce, they go before a lawyer and bear witness to the fact in writing. In the same manner you write it down for us. This will set a precedent between God and devotee. A matter of supreme importance for after this no devotee will have the right to argue or oppose God,” he ended solemnly.

“Do not waste time in this idle chatter, leave as quickly as you can. All this writing of statements appears superfluous to me, and I cannot possibly write so much. You know very well I cannot write,” she replied.

“I will guide your hand and get it written,” offered Anna Maharaj. Immediately a pen and some paper manifested before Kamal. Compelling Kamal to take the pen, Anna Maharaj placed his hand over hers and just as children are taught to write so he pressured Kamal’s hand into forming the necessary words. Kamal disdained to even glance at the paper. Anna Maharaj spoke aloud, “From this day our relationship is at an end.” Kamal naturally assumed that this was the contents of the paper. Anna Maharaj also wrote something down on another sheet of paper. He then asked Kamal to read the contents of her paper, and she was astounded to read, “From today I will not forget Anna Maharaj for even a second.” Kamal flung the paper away and snatching the one from Anna Maharaj’s hand read, “Even after great effort from today you will never be able to forget me even for a second.”

What a difference in what was spoken and what was written! What was said and what was done! It was all beyond Kamal’s understanding. Kamal gazed for a few seconds in amazement as the emotions of anger, joy and sadness simultaneously battled within her. The full importance of the events finally registered, and she trembled, her mouth drying up as she dropped senseless to the ground. Both Baba and Anna Maharaj left her in this state.

CHAPTER 10

24th July 1980

Awakening the next morning Kamal took some water in a jug and went to wash in the back courtyard. When she poured the water into her hand a bumble bee also toppled out. Using her free hand, she made many attempts to cast it out, but all her efforts were in vain. This little drama was enacted over and over again until tired Kamal eventually gave up, quite prepared to allow it to go into her mouth if it so wished. To her utter astonishment it did. Kamal thought it would simply be a matter of opening her mouth to be rid of it but contrary to her expectations it went straight down her throat.

Actually, since morning Kamal had been reviewing the events and conversation of the night before. Recollecting Anna Maharaj's and Baba's statements and her own responses, the bumble bee was furthest from her thoughts. It never occurred to her on seeing the bee in the water that perhaps 'This was Baba and He had come to enliven her with some experience'. It was only when the bee form assumed by Baba disappeared down her throat did she understand that Baba's mischievous pranks had recommenced. A strict adherent of bodily dharma Kamal was repulsed by the thought of a live insect in her stomach. She was assailed by butterflies and ticklishness as the bee disturbed her insides. She tried to force it out by vomiting but the Lord refused to be so coerced. Kamal decided to ignore its presence so after completing her ablutions she started with her morning chores.

When the day's tasks tower over one one is generally in a hurry to finish them, so it was with Kamal. Though her hands were fully occupied her mental processes raced ahead at a furious pace as she thought 'Despite the state I reduced the poor bee to yesterday he has come again today to confer darshan on me. But why has it entered my stomach? Though I am impatient to worship it I cannot do so now. Baba refused to accept my puja yesterday so at least I can derive some satisfaction from worshipping the bee,' ran her mind.

Approximately one and half to two hours later Kamal had the distinct impression that the bee was rising from her stomach and crawling up her throat. Though Kamal awaited further developments nothing happened. So, rinsing her mouth she entered the main house. In the kitchen as a drop of water fell from her hand onto the stool: the bee became perceptible seated thereon. Kamal's spirits soared high on being graced with this darshan of the Lord. Its unusual appearance bespoke its divine nature for it was the size of a lemon, pitch black supporting a rainbow of seven coloured bow shaped stripes across its back. To Kamal the bumble bee took on the precious and treasured value of a gold mine. Its peaceful demeanour and serious contemplative look reminded Kamal of the ancient meditating munis of the past. As her innate virtuous feelings revived and she reviewed yesterday's conversation, compassion resurrected within. Deluged by waves of remorse she craved Baba's indulgence, 'Baba pardon me I have committed a very grave error. Apart from You, who can possibly absolve me? You are my everything! In this world there

is no one but You who is mine. This I have fully understood,' she prayed from the bottom of her heart.

Kamal's mind swirled in a whirl of deliberations as her physical frame ran hither and thither collecting the necessary articles for puja. The bumble bee form of Baba magnanimously sat upon its seat in total tranquillity. Suddenly out of the blue Kamal decided to carry out a test. She would place some sugar before the bee; if it were eaten, she would then be certain that this was Baba in disguise and conduct puja. If not, then it could be taken that it was just another insect, and she would refrain from worshipping it. Opening the sugar container, she heaped a spoon of sugar before the bee. To her astonishment it was consumed within seconds. Kamal placed another and Baba promptly disposed of it. Now this little game became an amusing entertainment for Kamal. She repeatedly placed small heaps of sugar in front of Baba until the whole container was empty. Baba thus disposed of five kilos of sugar! Fully convinced of Baba's identity Kamal joyfully carried out her ritual worship of Baba which He accepted with equal pleasure. After the puja it is the custom to offer naivdhya but now there was no sugar left and it was Baba who had eaten it! Kamal, concluding it not necessary to offer anything now started to replace her puja items. At this Baba's voice emerged from the bee.

"So, what if I have eaten the sugar? If you wish to do puja you are obliged to offer naivdhya," He declared.

Beset by the problem of where to requisition sugar from so early in the morning she thought of her brother-in-law's house. But they would ask a thousand questions. What possible explanation could she offer? Eventually mustering her courage, she went to his house and returned with a small dish of sugar. Perhaps it was due to Baba's grace that no one had asked her anything. Kamal offered the naivdhya of sugar and prostrating made namaskaram. Kamal's immense jubilation expressed itself in a bout of unstoppable laughter. At this the camouflaged Baba spoke, "Kamal I am still hungry give Me something else to eat." Kamal wondered what else she could offer so early in the morning.

"Last night you cut a mango of which one slice should still be remaining in the cupboard," said the bee in Baba's voice.

On investigation Kamal found nothing. Perhaps her son had eaten it on his way to school. Returning she informed the bee of this.

"Accha, forget the mango but a few days ago Shakutai brought you some potato chevra which is in that box over there. Give Me that," said Baba.

"What chevra?" asked Kamal deliberately feigning ignorance. "When did Shakutai give it to me? Where is it kept? I do not remember anything! I think that perhaps it is also finished," she added innocently.

“Since when did you start telling lies? Who taught you all this?” asked Baba.

“Apart from Yourself, till today, I have never learned anything from anyone. You taught me to lie. Recollect how by lying to me You took me to various places. The deceit You practised when You promised ‘I will not leave you’ and then You deserted me midway. Remember it! At that time, I also learned to practise and employ lies,” she ended triumphantly turning the tables on Baba.

Baba laughed at her ingenuity. The laughter, tone and voice all belonged to Baba but the form before Kamal was that of a bumble bee. Suddenly Kamal was struck by a notion that although Baba was speaking through the bee’s mouth would He be able to help Himself to the chevra? If it proved beyond Him, He would then be compelled to manifest shakshatkar! Thinking thus, Kamal with deceptive honeyed sweetness laughingly said, “Baba I really cannot remember where I have left that chevra but if You know then You fetch it here and sit and eat it like You did the sugar.”

Kamal eagerly watched the ensuing events avidly, curious as to what would happen. How would the bee extract the chevra from the box? Flying upwards the bee buzzed over towards the box and with the aid of his wing removed the lid. Then lifting the packet of chevra with his feet he replaced the lid and returning settled down with the chevra on the stool. Witnessing this phenomenally novel feat Kamal was enveloped in rollicking laughter, like one gone mad, as she eyed Baba curiously.

“You can do anything! This performance of Yours is so beautifully enchanting that I wish it could be repeated again and again. But why are You not laughing with me,” she asked. She stared at Baba intently as she recommenced laughing. Soon both voices merged together as Baba also joined in enjoying the joke. On the bee’s back, at the point where the wings met, there was a small crack from which Baba’s voice emerged. Observing this novel’s unique happening Kamal laughed even more merrily. It became essential to halt this over enthusiastic display, so Baba became silent.

“Will you not offer Me the chevra? Or are you just going to carry on laughing?” He asked cracklingly.

Calming down, Kamal looked at Baba inquisitively then taking some chevra from the packet she placed it before Baba. He disposed of it within moments. The second offering swiftly followed the way of the first. Kamal decided that Baba may well consume all the chevra as He had the sugar, so she removed the remainder to take back inside.

“I’m not yet satisfied. I want to eat some more chevra. Why are you taking it away? I propose to eat all the chevra. But do not fear by eating it will not finish, rather it will become doubled,” promised Baba setting Kamal's mind at rest.

Kamal regretted her act, for without first seeking permission she should not have removed the chevra. Deeply repentant and thoroughly ashamed of her own hasty action, she tipped the contents of the whole packet before Baba and begging His pardon sat before Him with hands folded in prayer. Baba quickly ate all the chevra and disappeared without further ado.

At least Baba had come even though it was in the guise of a bee! And He had exhibited a disarming degree of pleasure and fun, also eating before He left. Kamal's mind brimmed over with exulting elation and contentment as she reminisced over the morning's events. Enthusiastically she entered into her household chores. Shortly however she was perturbed by the fact that since Baba had eaten a quantity of fried savoury chevra so early in the morning His throat may be dry, and He would suffer the pangs of thirst! He had omitted to drink any water. Kamal was distracted by this worry.

At this point it is essential to inform the readers that Kamal is as amazed and mystified at her actions and ideas on the conclusion of each particular episode as perhaps the readers are. For instance, in the above related incident Kamal began to worry about Baba. Whereas in reality does Baba lack anything in the way of food and drink? Does His physical frame function like our mortal bodies? Similarly, the notion that Baba's throat may be dry and He is probably thirsty due to eating chevra is a novel one. Kamal herself feels this to be so. However, at the time of the experiences it was beyond her control and such curious thoughts surfaced by themselves, action was taken at which she herself is later astounded.

Although engaged in her household duties the matter of Baba's thirst troubled Kamal. A concerned voice arose of itself from within her heart praying that Baba, in the guise of the bee if He wished, would at least return and drink some water. At this the bumble bee manifested and softly buzzing circled around Kamal. Elated Kamal ran towards the water pitcher.

"I do not need any water," said the Baba bee. "Only yesterday you told Me never to come again and that you would never call Me either. So why are you enacting this drama today? How much you thrashed the poor bee yesterday. He barely managed to escape alive. Why didn't you feel any compassion then? And now if the bee is dying of thirst, let it die. Why do you worry? Now I'll not come again," finished Baba succinctly. Concluding His stricture Baba vanished.

Kamal was seriously assailed by an attack of tremors, her hands and feet shook, her heart raced wildly as tears chased one another dropping like dewdrops from her eyes. Soon Kamal succeeded in controlling her errant emotions consoling herself with the thought that in the afternoon after the daily discourse she would visit Anna Maharaj and recount all these incidents to him and plead with him to somehow assist in patching up this rift between Baba and herself. Then everything will be fine, back to normal. Comforting herself thus she lifted the pitcher and heading towards the river she replenished it whilst repeatedly calling on Baba. But Baba refused to yield to her prayers. At 4pm Kamal attended the mandir for the lecture. Then, after partaking of tirth darshan and prasad she headed for Anna Maharaj's living quarters. As she approached the stairway leading to his room, she saw Anna Maharaj's guru Mama Maharaj and his guru Kaka Maharaj standing guard either side of the stairway. Seeing this Kamal was baffled and puzzled as

she had never before had occasion to see them pratyaksh before. All she had ever seen were photographs of the two. Awestruck into speechlessness she silently and with deep respect touched their feet. Then humbly thanking them for their precious darshan, she sought permission to visit Anna Maharaj. They both refused stating in adamant tones, "The entrance is closed."

"Mama, I had heard that you are mercifully compassionate and evince a great love towards your disciples. Today being blessed with your darshan I am indeed fortunate but why are you angry with me? What is my error? I am like your granddaughter, great granddaughter so pray do not be enraged with me. Please do not stop me from seeing Anna Maharaj. Kaka please make Mama assent to this," she implored.

"Alright I will take you to Anna, but we must hide you from Mama's sight," replied Kaka Maharaj.

Kamal happily consented and Kaka tenderly stroked her head with love as with a child, then taking her hand in his he proceeded to climb the stairs. There was no limit to Kamal's joy. Elated she blissfully closed her eyes. Her intellect and reasoning faculties ceased to function as she savoured to the full the delight of this ecstatic ananda. In reality she was no longer present in the physical body. She only opened her eyes when Kaka Maharaj informed her, "You are now standing before Anna Maharaj." Kamal received a mighty shock for she was in fact standing before Anna Maharaj's photograph in her own mandir, in her own house! With one difference, Anna Maharaj was also present in reality seated. Informing her that she could now ask anything she wished Kaka Maharaj left. Kamal furious at this deception of Kaka Maharaj's decided to return to the ashram forthwith. Once there she saw that there was yet a considerable amount of hustle and bustle as people wandered about. She stood alone in a corner thinking. After much deliberation she arrived at the conclusion that since Mama and Kaka Maharaj had prevented her from visiting Anna, she should refrain from doing so. Returning home she quickly finished her duty of cooking and serving supper and settled down to await Baba's coming, resolving that immediately upon His arrival she would offer Him water to drink. With this in mind she began to hail Baba. Suddenly Baba manifested and without so much as glancing at Kamal quickly went towards the pitcher of water helping Himself to a glass of water, He swiftly drank it standing. Replacing the glass on the pitcher lid He asked innocently, "Yes, now tell me why you have been incessantly calling upon Me since this morning? What is so urgent?"

Baba had already Himself fulfilled her earnest desire. Witnessing His display of love, a torrent of bliss overflowed in the form of tears which coursed down her cheeks. Placing her head upon His feet Kamal washed them with her love-soaked tears. It was quite a while before Kamal regained her composure.

"Baba why did You drink so much water immediately on arrival?" she queried sitting down before Him.

"What can I do? Since eating the chevra this morning I have been consumed by thirst the whole day long," He replied sweetly, and He laughed. Kamal was naturally delighted.

“Are you not going to ask why I was late in coming to you today? Today I went to Shatkutai’s house,” He said.

Wondrously surprised Kamal clapped her hands happily approving. Just as a child expresses its love when offered a desirable gift by clinging to its mother so also Kamal clung to Baba, hugging Him.

“Truly Baba? When did You go? How did You give darshan? What did she say? Baba, what stupendously wonderful news You have given me. You should have stayed with her a little longer and granted darshan to her complete satisfaction. There would have been no harm done if You had been even later in coming to me. When did You confer darshan on her,” she asked in a continuous stream.

“When she was seated in meditation, then!” replied Baba

“How was she seated? What was the expression on her face like?” she asked eagerly.

“She was sitting calmly with eyes closed. Her face was wreathed in smiles, so she appeared very beautiful. Look like this,” said Baba as He imitated Shakutai exactly.

Provoked by these antics Kamal burst into gleeful laughter. “Tell me truly when will You confer darshan in accordance with her wishes,” she asked when she had recovered from her mirth. “When You grant her such darshan then I will believe that You have fulfilled my final wish.”

“That’s it now, you have returned to wilfulness again! I have informed you a thousand times that I will not give darshan according to your wish. When the appropriate time arrives, I will award darshan in conformance with My will. But you always bring up this subject again and again,” said Baba.

“Baba, to me Shakutai seems like the very form of wisdom and love. She has told me so many times how sincerely and desperately she craves Your darshan. Her yearning, wisdom, everything is far superior to mine. So why are You demurring to grant her darshan?” she asked tenaciously.

“No matter what, I will not grant darshan unless it is My will to do so. I am fully cognisant of the mode to employ and also who should be awarded darshan when. You need not torment your life over it for it will do no good,” replied Baba equally stubbornly.

Kamal’s despondency and anguish increased steadily. Falling prey to bitter infelicity she flung acrimonious accusations at Baba, referring to Him as cruel, unfeeling, harsh and brutally merciless. Baba sat peacefully unaffected throughout Kamal’s tirade, only responding after a lengthy silence with, “Kamal What can I do? I cannot violate My own rules! Also, this would not have been right for Shakutai. Just think, were I to give darshan to Shakutai now she would assume it to be a mere figment of her imagination, a shallow fleeting glimpse. This would be her

first mistake. A doubt ridden mind is immature and unripe for God's darshan. Her love is not unwaveringly unshakable. It is volatile and fluctuates. When love arises, it is indescribably intense but the very next second, becoming immersed in worldly affairs she forgets everything. What use is love which resembles a river in spate and floods and ebbs? Love should be unwavering, steady. Devotion should be unfaltering, sure and faith firmly rooted. The mind should be attached and drawn towards God day and night ceaselessly. Whilst Shakutai is with you she is desperate for darshan. She must learn to retain this state unchanged, pray for it continuously," explained Baba.

While Baba was painstakingly explaining the above Kamal kept up an unending flow of tears, intermittently interrupting with various derogatory remarks and epithets which happened to come to mind. However, Baba maintained His undeviating stance, "Kamal, I have told you the true state of affairs. Why are you tormenting yourself so? Why are you thus pained? Once the right time arrives, I will definitely confer darshan. I have not said that I will never give darshan. On many occasions you yourself explain to others 'You will not gain God like this. Do you think He is your personal garden vegetable or something?' Then why are you engaging in this futile prattling? That the darshan with which you are blessed with every day with ease should be conferred on everyone is impossible because:

Jo jaisa majkarne, May taisa tyaj karne
I offer and approach others with exactly the same
intentions as they approach Me with.

You have been praying for My attainment for the past fourteen births and it is only now in the fifteenth birth that you could win My company. Even so I will inform you of one happy thing. Shakutai will have her desire for darshan fulfilled in this very birth. Now do not say anything more about it," said Baba.

"It is all of Your devising, Your plan and will. If You so wished, You could make Shakutai's mind steady in a second so why do You delight in always playing this game?" asked Kamal, determined not to give up.

"I have already said that I am gradually, slowly guiding her progress along the lines I require. The main problem is that you do not see any value in Me because I come to you everyday. Whether you call Me or not, or whether you argue with Me, I still come. But why do I act thus? The reason is that you have conquered Me with your love. Apart from love there are no other thoughts or notions in your mind. Your mind is utterly pure and beautiful. Your reasonless illogical love compels and draws Me here. Other than the language of love you cannot understand any other language, so I am forced to come before you like this, to talk to you and teach you. Had you been within the category of devotees on the path of jnana you would never have been graced with these darshans. But your sweet honey like love does not allow Me to sit in peace. I have to come. That is my bounden duty," He smiled. "Now listen to the regulations for jnana devotees. Until such time as a jnani devotee becomes fully realised and wise he cannot have darshan. Shakutai falls into this category and so when she becomes wise and fully self realised she will

definitely be awarded darshan. Look eight days from today I will give darshan to Shakutai, seated on a chair,” He offered by way of consolation.

“Baba hearing this I am gaining so much joy that I cannot even express it. But why after eight days? Why not today? Today is bhajan day please grant her darshan today, Baba,” she pleaded.

“Accha, I will go and give darshan and return here to you.” agreed Baba.

Thoroughly gratified and contented, Kamal awaited events. Baba returned in fifteen minutes. Greatly excited by the bliss coursing through her she fired one question after another. “Baba how did You give darshan? What did You say? Quickly tell me all that happened,” she shot in swift succession.

“I revealed a miracle to her as the very last bhajan was being sung. The garland adorning My photograph swayed in time to the music without any visible force. Witnessing this she gained an indication, a hint and was overwhelmed with bliss. I went and sat on the chair next to her. In her mind in meditation, she was seeing me seated on that chair. Although joyfully reflecting upon it in her mind, she never opened her eyes to see Me. Cognising this ‘That Baba is seated on the chair’ had she opened her eyes she would have had darshan of Me. But how could she open her eyes while in meditation? Thinking thus she kept them closed. Now tell Me, what could I do? Had you been in her place you would have immediately opened your eyes, come forward, clasped My feet and initiated conversation. But Shakutai sat unmoving. Finally, I rose and touching her forehead in benediction, I left. Listen, I have been here for so long I completely forgot something. In a place in space there is a deer who is My devotee I must go to her, and you are to come with Me,” finished Baba.

Kamal was terrified on hearing this. Frightened of where Baba would take her and what might happen. “Baba I’ve visited many places with You, let’s leave it for today,” she pleaded. “If You have to go then You go,” she added magnanimously.

“It won’t take long. We will be back in fifteen to twenty minutes,” He offered. “However, if you argue much more, I am quite capable of taking you along by holding just one hair of your head,” He promised.

Suiting the action to the word Baba promptly took hold of Kamal’s hair and leapt into the air. Soon both Kamal and Baba were winging their way through the air like an aeroplane. Kamal was petrified at the thought of Baba’s letting her go. What would be her condition then she thought. There was really no point in deliberating thus now she recollected as she consoled herself with Baba’s promise ‘I will never torment you again’. For ten to fifteen minutes, they both steadily rose higher and higher through space gaining momentum as they flew. Suddenly in this vast space Kamal became aware of an extensive open plain with red hued earth carpeted in luscious greener than green grass upon which a deer was grazing. The entire scene was stunningly beautiful. Each and every item appeared surpassingly lovely to behold and Kamal drank in the unusual vision in open eyed wonder and amazement attempting to make an immutable note of it

all. She stared at the deer unblinkingly. Meanwhile Baba and Kamal came to a halt. As soon as the deer saw them both she raced towards Baba. Within a second, she imprinted Baba's beloved form in her large innocent eyes. Then swiftly placing her head on His feet she lay down rapturously happy. Baba lovingly patted her head and at that instant the deer gave up its life voluntarily! On viewing the first scene Kamal had been made profoundly happy and was impressed, but now she was deeply distressed at the death of the deer and asked Baba why it had happened so.

“This was the deer's only desire. In every incarnation she prayed, ‘May I be granted the opportunity to touch God's feet and at that instant may death overtake me.’ I have merely fulfilled her desire. She suffered no pain. On the contrary, she gave up her life in utter contentment. I was about to confer darshan upon her a long time ago but what can I do, My time for darshan was with you. That time arrived for her after these many births. I know now that you will ask as to why I gave such a beautiful divine experience to a deer? Listen, this deer expressed and held to this one desire throughout all its thousands of births and finally at long last she has now received the fruit. In all her incarnations she was never angry, melancholy or pained. There was no diminishment in her joy. Instead, she incessantly forwarded her one yearning to die and attain liberation at God's feet. From this you must realise your colossal error when you madly insist on some person or other being granted darshan. Do not be so obstinate in future. You know that Sri Ram is not only difficult to attain but is also easily attainable too,” said Baba in apparent contradiction. “Come now we should go. Wait, how can we leave the deer in this state? I will extract the bones which I will throw into the Chitravatee river on reaching Puttaparthi. I will take the skin also as it will be useful to the brahmins and priests during yagna's,” He added.

Gathering both skin and bones but leaving the remaining flesh upon the red earth they returned home. As soon as they alighted in Kamal's courtyard Baba made known His decision to return to the plain again.

“I will go to Puttaparthi in the same way through the air, but first I will do one thing. Taking some jasmine flowers from your ashram I will scatter them over the remains of the deer after that I will go to Puttaparthi,” said Baba compassionately.

Kamal entered her house as Baba flew upwards to fulfill His errand of love.

CHAPTER 11

August 1980

It was the day of Narali purnima (Raksha bhandan). Baba arrived at the earlier time of midnight. Kamal had already fallen asleep. Baba gently woke her up. Kamal prostrated and then sat before Him.

“You have not seen how beautiful the moon looks tonight. Look outside, see how big it is and how it sparkles,” said Baba.

Due to the day’s excessive workload and her resulting tiredness Kamal was in desperate need of sleep, which is why she had been asleep. She lacked the time to explore and appreciate the natural beauties of God’s creation. So even when Baba desired to reveal this novel and wonderful spectacle she was not unduly interested. Glancing outside without any marked degree of interest or inquisitiveness she responded, “Yes, it’s very bright. It’s a fine moon.”

“Do look carefully. I’m trying to draw your attention to one thing, and you are looking at another,” Baba complained. “Turn your sight high up above towards the moon. What can you see up there? Tell Me who is upon the moon?” He asked.

Kamal sat down properly and focusing all her attention and concentration, she raised her eyes and looked. “Ahh, what’s that?” she said as the words involuntarily escaped her lips.

“Tell Me, what can you see?” asked Baba.

“Baba, I can see the four-armed Sri Krishna. He is standing with the sudarshan chakra in his hand, and I am seated upon the chakra. Good gracious, with what speed that chakra is spinning. I am also spinning around with it. But how did I reach there? I am sitting conversing with You. What is all this? Or is that someone else up there?” she asked in bewilderment.

“No, it is you! You have recognised yourself perfectly. However, just look again to make sure if it is you. One here and one there!” replied Baba.

Kamal stared with studious concentration and again correctly identified herself. The same sari, blouse, face, hands, all hers. However, the query of how this distant vision could be so clearly visible to her did not even enter her pure mind. She was completely absorbed in the scene above her.

“Come, let us go closer and look. We will go directly to the moon itself,” said Baba.

“No, no, Baba I’m afraid. How can we go to so distant and high a place? Look at where the moon is and where we are! Perhaps You can go but what will become of me?” she asked.

Whilst this conversation was in progress an enormously powerful mammoth snake descended slowly from the moon. Hanging from the moon it reached right to the ground directly before Kamal. Miraculously its tail rested on the moon as its large fear inspiring face and hood swayed before Kamal and Baba. The hindermost part of the tail was coiled to form a platform upon which stood Sri Krishna. On seeing the straight, seemingly endless length of this colossal snake, Kamal unobtrusively crept closer to Baba, grasping His hand in hers as dread contracted her heart, which beat wildly within her. Ignoring her unspoken plea Baba ordered her to climb the snake's back to the moon above. What could she do in the face of this command directly from God Himself? Girding her unfailing spirit Kamal boldly stepped onto the snake's back, only to be revolted as her feet contacted its soft, slippery flesh. How could they possibly climb up this slick malleable flesh? This problematic worry she confided to Baba. However, that monumental reptile was covered in a morass of hair which now transformed, in some mystical manner, to form a long stairway of steep steps. Baba intrepidly led the way enjoining Kamal to follow closely behind. Kamal's heart throbbed madly; her indomitable spirit deserted her as her heart flagged miserably at this terrifying ordeal. So, she cunningly connived an escape. But before she could act, without even deigning to look behind, Baba sharply reprimanded her. Kamal realised that she had no option but to follow Baba up this fairytale stairway to the moon above. A short while later Baba began to play hide and seek. He would become invisible or hide Himself somewhere. At this Kamal's feet refused to move and, overcome by dire apprehensions she would head back below. At this Baba would reappear above. "Hey, where are you going? We are climbing up not going down," He'd shout.

"Baba these games have been played too often and I'm fed up with them. Always under the pretext of taking me somewhere You heap calamities upon me. What possible happiness do You gain from making a spectacle of me? I am sorely distressed by it all," she complained.

"Accha, then you go in front, and I'll come up behind you. By doing it this way you will no longer feel frightened. We will see how swiftly you go and how quickly you can reach the moon," replied Baba.

The proposal met with Kamal's approval. Nevertheless, at first, she continuously checked behind and was comforted to see Baba following. So, Kamal's courage and earnest zeal surfaced. Happily chatting away, she rapidly stepped up briskly. But even after climbing for some time the moon still appeared to be quite distant and the magical stairway unending, but Baba was behind her responding with an invariable 'Yes, yes,' so she carried on confidently. Finally, she heaved a long sigh of relief as she reached journey's end and looked behind to, what? Baba was not with her! She searched all around for Baba. Inadvertently her gaze fell upon her house down below and she was stunned to see Baba standing by her mattress looking at her on the moon. For Kamal the sky caved in. There was nothing else on that barren moon except Kamal and that frightful snake. Although Kamal had seen and come into contact with many snakes, none were so repulsively ghastly as this one. And to add to the odious ordeal even her feet were not on solid ground as she was still suspended in midair. Gripped by appalling horror Kamal was rapidly soaked in perspiration which, she was stricken to note, fell in rivulets onto the snake from whence

it coursed down to the earth below literally forming a lake there. She was at a loss as to whether she should laugh or cry. At this the snake retrieved its head from below bringing it back to the moon. Not knowing what to do in this daunting situation Kamal cried helplessly. At this moment her gaze suddenly fell on Sri Krishna, calming her instantly. She was astonished as to why she had not seen Sri Krishna before now. Her panic and anxiety died a sudden death as she resolved 'Not to leave'. Should Baba appear even then she would refuse to go. In fact, this place now presented itself as ideal to her.

Baba arrived. "Come, now we will go down," He said affably.

"I will not come. I am perfectly fine here," replied Kamal angrily, avoiding looking at Baba.

"Unbelievable! When I was asking you to come up you did not wish to do so, and now when I am offering to take you down you will not go down! How very obstinate you are. I have never till today come across so wilful a girl as you. Listen, you should return home. Yes, I know you will quite cheerfully remain up here, but down there are your husband and children, will they be able to live without you? If you mysteriously disappear like this how concerned and anxious your family will be? The poor things will search for you everywhere! They will be publicly disgraced! In particular consider the state your husband and children will be in. Think for awhile! I am responsible for bringing you here. If you refuse to return home, then I will be obliged to disguise Myself as Kamal and live in your house. You are becoming neglectful and careless but how can I be so? I will have to act the part of Kamal exactly," replied Baba righteously.

Baba deliberately formed an expression of deep studious reflection. Pretending the drama of one absorbed in deep thought He stood in pindrop silence. The fact that Kamal had resolved to stay on the moon is not to be construed as Kamal's complete freedom from fear. On the contrary she was very suspicious and nervously alarmed. She unblinkingly kept her gaze glued on that terrifying snake. As soon as Baba ended His speech the mammoth reptile twisted its face in Kamal's direction nearing quite, quite close. Seeing its grim scaly face Kamal realised that it had every intention of eating, swallowing and disposing of her. This presupposition of hers proved false. It did not eat her but far worse it grasped a lock of her hair in its mouth and proceeded to whirl her around like so much flotsam. White as a sheet, petrified and in extreme agony she ultimately closed her eyes resigning herself with 'Let it do whatever it wishes'. Despite her obvious expectations, nothing worse happened. Following a quick spin it redeposited her near Baba. Baba watched her reactions with interest, but Kamal still expressed no desire to return home.

Eventually Baba said, "Alright, I will live in your home disguised as Kamal but you will have to become Baba."

Kamal thought that whether she stayed on the moon as Kamal or Baba made little or no difference at all because there was no one else present. It is a far cry from what actually happened. With a quick "I'm going," Baba briskly descended the steps on the snake's back. At

this Kamal was beset by a barrage of uncertainties which undermined her courage. ‘What is difficult for Baba? To make anything possible is child’s play for Him. This creator of the cosmos, wirepuller and master is competent to transform the sky into earth and the earth into sky within one second. On hearing the cry of His devotees, He can be in numerous places at the same time to save and protect His devotees from perilous situations. This miraculous energy and strength adds lustre to His power. What can I say? If a crow tries to become a swan, can it do so? If Kamal attempts to become Baba, can she be successful? No! Baba release me from this responsibility. I cannot carry such a burden,’ she thought within herself. But how could she ensure that this prayer of hers reached His ears? By now Baba had already set foot on the distant planet below. On arriving in Kamal’s courtyard Baba disguised Himself, donning the camouflage of Kamal’s face, form and colour, everything right down to her clothing etc. Then He went and lay down on her mattress. Between three thirty and four in the morning Kamal’s youngest son awoke and began to cry. Baba become Kamal, quietened him down and took him to the bathroom and then put him back to sleep. Within five minutes her husband awoke and shouted for a jug of water to wash with as he was going to the toilet. Naturally Baba fetched the water for him. Witnessing this spectacle Kamal nearly died of shame and embarrassment. As the first dim rays of dawn crept over the horizon Baba rose, gathered the evening dishes and taking them to the back courtyard settled down to wash them. Having concluded this wifely task, He set them to dry. Watching all this Kamal was overwhelmed by a strong desire to leap down and stop Baba from performing these low and demeaning chores. She could not bear to look on this awful sight. She had forced Baba into carrying out these base tasks! Thinking thus her heart pounded and throbbed causing her severe distress. Unable to stand this state of affairs she called upon Baba resonantly. Baba obligingly came up, donning His own form as soon as He reached her.

“Good heavens! How difficult your work is. I cannot do it,” He declared.

“Truly Baba such work definitely does not enhance or suit Your majesty. I too could never carry out Your work. Come, I will go down now,” she offered.

“No, no! What you have once decided to do you must complete,” He insisted.

“Baba no, be merciful. Everything is easy for You but what will I do? Even now there may be many devotees calling out to You. If I were to become Baba to which place will I go? Which person can I aid? Only You know how to accomplish all this work. Pray grace me with Your mercy and end this game,” she entreated.

“Why are you so worried? I am fully competent to complete it all,” He promised.

Now both their outward appearances changed. Baba became Kamal and Kamal became Baba. The same body, nose, countenance, hair and robe. Only the internal consciousness remained the same ie Kamal was in Baba’s body and Baba was in Kamal’s body. Kamal considered herself Kamal in Baba’s body and vice versa. Now Baba become Kamal descended the reptilian stairway and entering Kamal’s house, busied Himself with the daily chores. Whilst on the moon Kamal’s state became curious to say the least. All she could do was look at herself

again and again, marvelling at the transformation. She became seriously perturbed as she contemplated the responsibilities now incumbent upon her. Recollecting the undeviating nature of His vows and duties, His enormous responsibilities, Kamal was terrified into silent reflection. Remembering how Baba's heart melts like candle wax on hearing the heart-rending cry of His devotees our mental competence becomes doubtful. Hey Sai, how difficult it is to become Baba. At this a jumble of voices began to impinge upon Kamal's hearing, "Baba what could You be doing at such a time?" As Kamal deliberated on how and what action she should take she was summarily wafted through the air by an unknown force to an unknown destination. In spite of her wish to stop, it was not in her power to do so. After flying through the air like an aeroplane for some time she finally alighted before a very poor cottage. Kamal walked inside. Within was an infirm old woman who beset and distracted by a fatal illness, chanted 'Sai Ram, Sai Ram' ceaselessly as she lay on her bed. Even though helpless through old age and assailed by disease there was all the evidence of freshly conducted puja in the home. How can the splendour of the puja be expressed? It was unparalleled. Baba's photograph was lavishly decorated and garlanded with flowers. The whole place was fragrant with the sweet smell of incense and an atmosphere of peaceful devotional fervour permeated throughout. The whole scene was wholly indescribably lovely due to the pure shining light of the old lady's soul. Baba's photograph was well adorned with all the puja requisites, flowers, rice grains, incense, niranjan etc. in accordance with the accepted disciplines.

"Hey Sai Ram, my compassionate Baba come quickly. Oh, my merciful Sai where are You?" cried out the old woman loudly. Employing these respectful and loving terms she was calling on her Lord.

Kamal went towards her. The old woman became mad with joy on seeing Baba. So much so that it is impossible to describe her state in words. Rising she clasped Kamal's, or more to the point Baba's feet crying, "Baba seeing you today there is no limit to my happiness."

Kamal placed her hand upon the old woman's head with all due sentiment. She swept it over her entire frame. Instantly the woman was cured as all her maladies melted away. Jubilant the woman carried out full ritual puja. Witnessing her devotional attitude and prayerfully magnificent puja Kamal was tickled with merriment and glee as tears trickled and fell like pearl drops from her eyes. Seeing this the old woman was sorrow stricken.

"Baba what is this? Why are you crying? I have never before seen this aspect of yours," she queried, pained for she no sooner finished speaking than she burst into an avalanche of tears, crying so much that there seemed to be no end to it. Kamal could discover no means of quietening her down or stemming the flow of love filled tears. Kamal explained, tried to make her understand, consoled her all in vain, for she continued sobbing. Finally, Kamal rose to leave.

"Hey, my affectionate mother, friend of the poor and distressed. Lord of all, Sai Ram, pray confer such darshans on me repeatedly making me happy and successful. May this aspect of your grace be eternally bestowed upon me," she prayed as she fell at Kamal's feet to take namaskaram only to evince her obvious amazement at seeing Kamal's slippered feet. Kamal herself was

stunned as to how and where they had come from. “Baba what is this? How come slippers are on your feet?” she asked in wide eyed wonder.

“It is nothing of importance. It all goes along so. It makes no difference to me if I do wear such things. Sometimes they are even necessary,” responded Kamal at a loss herself.

The old woman, disposing of this subject, now initiated an obstinacy programme of her own. She wished to go with Baba. Now Kamal was trapped into a truly weird problem. She attempted in various ways to make her understand that it was not possible but in vain.

“Look, you are always with me, and I am with you. So what necessity is there for the physical body to go with me? Is this wilfulness of yours proper? What about all your property here? How can you leave it all and go?” Kamal asked logically.

“Baba one day I will have to leave all these things. I have no attachment to them. My mind does not wish to be enmeshed by or adhere to them. This opportunity before me today, when will it come again? To actually have the good fortune and chance of really going with you in reality. I have never even dreamed of such luck, or ever hoped for it in my dreams. I no longer desire to remain here. I will not stop until I go with you,” she stated adamantly.

All reasonable arguments and explanations failed to impress the stubborn old woman and so Kamal, left with no option, thought about how to take her along. Kamal asked her to sit on her shoulders with which order the old woman gladly complied. Now Kamal was confronted with the problem of where to take her. Kamal commenced walking and how arduous it was proving. On her way there she had flown like a leaf in the wind. Fortunately, however, she began to rise of her own accord and was quickly whizzing through space again. After flying for some time they arrived on the moon. Setting the old woman down they prostrated offering their pranams to Sri Krishna and the snake. On this occasion Kamal experienced no fear whatsoever. Kamal looked longingly down at her home where Baba was preoccupied with His tasks of dish washing and sweeping. Kamal was heartily upset, unable to bear the burden and regretted that her foolish obstinacy had compelled the all-powerful Lord of the universe to engage in such lowly work. Requesting the old woman to stay there awhile Kamal descended the long stairway. Baba was delighted to see her.

“Accha, you completed the work, did you not?” He asked pleasantly.

“Baba that’s it! Enough! Whatever You wished to do You got done by my hands. How could it not be done? I am only an instrument. The actual doer is You alone. Now You go to Your own place. Look up there, I have left the old woman there. You quickly go up and do whatever is necessary for her. All this is beyond my comprehension,” said Kamal.

“Yes, yes, I will go but there is one thing I must say Kamal. I have only carried out your work for a few hours, but how difficult it is. That I have truly experienced today. Amazing indeed is your allegiance to duty. How can you do this work everyday?” He asked seriously.

“Let it go Baba. I am in the habit of doing it, it only seems difficult to You,” she replied in an assumed tone of surprise. “Why are You pretending Baba? What can possibly be difficult for You? Do not deliberately puff up my ego. Now hurry up there for the old woman is alone and probably calling You. Your work is a thousand times more difficult than mine,” she added wisely.

Baba prepared to leave and as soon as He placed His foot on the first step He transformed into His own form and Kamal became Kamal again standing in her own courtyard. Baba raced upwards. Seeing Him the old woman flooded with bliss fell at His feet. Noticing the lack of slippers, she asked Baba about them. Baba replied non-committedly that, “It is all nothing and it all goes along like this.”

“Baba this place is so beautiful. Being benevolent You have brought me here. I could never have hoped for such immense grace,” she said joyfully.

“Are you not frightened by the fact that you are alone, distant from earth in the company of this terrible snake?” asked Baba.

“When You are present how can there be any fear,” she replied not at all intimidated by the picture projected by Baba.

Seated below Kamal could hear this exchange loud and clear as if they were quite close to her. Ordering the old woman to remain there, which she readily and happily agreed to, Baba offered her charansparsh and blessed her before returning down to Kamal. From her place Kamal could clearly see Baba’s laughable and ridiculous facial expressions. That beautiful, enticing and alluring countenance made Kamal oblivious to her physical frame as she stared at Him unblinkingly. Even when Baba came and sat by her side, she failed to register the fact.

“Whenever I ask you to go anywhere with Me you always refuse, being always frightened. Look how cheerfully the old woman is staying up there all alone. She is not in the least afraid,” said Baba, His words finally drawing her attention.

“Yes Baba, it is all Your play. What can I do?” she asked in return.

Laughing merrily Baba arose to leave. Sri Krishna, the snake, in fact everything vanished as mysteriously as it had appeared. The moon regained its normal aspect. It was now four thirty in the morning. When did time stop and when did it start? Kamal failed to realise. Can anyone ever understand or fathom God’s maya, His illusionary power? Baba had also vanished. Entranced by the melody of Sri Krishna’s mystically magical murali, Kamal too fell into slumber.

CHAPTER 12

December 1980

In the month of Paush which falls in the latter part of December and early January it was the final day of a seven-day reading of a religious text in honour of Kaka Maharaj. Kamal's guru's supreme lineage was of this order. Kamal's guru was Anna Maharaj, and his guru was Mama Maharaj and his guru was Kaka Maharaj. At two in the afternoon Kamal was occupied with washing the lunch dishes. Suddenly she became aware of a loud resonant chanting of the maha mantra given to her by her guru. Dropping the work in hand Kamal sat silently for a few moments, listened intently and then began a search to discover from where it came. As she was unsuccessful in locating its origin her curiosity and confusion increased. However, Kamal proceeded with her work but before long the sonorous tones recommenced with increased vigour, proclaiming the maha mantra with renewed force. As Kamal avidly imbibed the sound, she became unaccountably conscious for a spell that it was perhaps emanating from her own body. So relinquishing her work she again halted, concentrating, tuning in. It became apparent that her previous supposition was false and that it was really issuing from elsewhere. Having resolved to discover the origins of the mysterious phonetics Kamal hastily rinsed the dishes. Quickly depositing them in the kitchen she returned immediately to the washroom area where she had been engaged in washing them.

I have formerly described the area, dimensions and conditions prevailing in the washroom in the November 1978 episode. At one end of the washroom a three-foot drop drainage passage is formed allowing the dirty water to exit. Despite its depth it is not covered by any form of netting or grill. On returning to the washroom Kamal disposed of the dirty bucket water down the drain, and the most astounding thing happened. Instead of exiting along the drainage system the water came back, and from it arose great puffs of steam from which issued the maha mantra chant. The truth was that the ringing tones were emerging from the water itself. Kamal had failed to guess this. Curious as to what would happen next, she sat down to watch with all consuming interest. Slowly the water level lowered gradually and disappeared down the drain. Soon the reverberating resonance increased its pitch loudly hailing the maha mantra from the drain itself. Instantly Kamal put her hand in the drain groping for anything concrete, but found nothing but mud, slime and dirty water. After washing her hands thoroughly Kamal sat down again, staring with one pointed attention at the drain.

Eventually, in that deep, dark pitch-black drain she saw a vision. The word Om was clearly visible to her. The particular peculiarity of this omkar was its illustration of how the body can be delineated in the form of omkar. This was painted on a blackboard next to which Anna Maharaj was seated in a state of meditation. His appearance and apparel were not as usual, as his hair was gathered into a mass to form a large ball on top of his head, and he supported a two-foot-long beard and the clothes of a tapasvi (ascetic). Kamal never before having seen this aspect and form of Anna Maharaj stared in wide eyed astonishment. A growing desire for charansparsh

manifested but this vision was so deep and below ground level. So still seated Kamal prayerfully folded her hands and expressed her yearning at which the vision steadily rose higher. Before long, it was level with Kamal. Anna Maharaj was deeply immersed in voicing the omkar (AUM). Moving forward Kamal satisfied her longing, touching his feet. No words were exchanged. Nevertheless, the following sound emerged from Anna Maharaj's frame, "Kamal return to the house and continue with your work. I will come at ten o'clock tonight and talk to you." Having conveyed this message, the entire vision vanished.

Whilst working Kamal's mind could only revolve around the curious spectacle of Anna Maharaj's form and attire. In honour of his promise Anna Maharaj manifested at ten wearing the same clothes and form. Kamal lacked the courage to ask Anna Maharaj about his unique attire. Taking a seat he proceeded to speak.

"Listen, I have given the maha mantra to numerous disciples. I have explained and instructed in great detail and scope with regard to the internal state. Full and complete knowledge of every individual condition has been revealed. How we are joined to God. How we are merged with him through single pointed allegiance and an all-encompassing devotional attitude. How we have no bond with any other thing but yet are undivided from and uniquely identical with this Paramatma. I have repeated these explanations many times. You remember them all, do you not? But how many other people have retained these matters in their memory? These people become votaries, accept disciplines and maha mantra but they have no inkling of its true power. Many people are deprived of the intrinsic influence, effect and grandeur of the maha mantra. Their intellects are too weak to grasp the significance and glory of the mantra, disciplines and sadguru. To comprehend the secrets, enigmas and mysteries of this path, serious and in-depth deliberations are essential. However, many persons are carelessly flippant about such matters."

Concluding his elucidation Anna Maharaj let out a long melancholy sigh before becoming silent. Kamal could understand and sympathise with his suffering up to a point. At some time or other every single human being experiences during his lifetime one of the following: the anxiety caused to a mother by her innocent child's actions, the annoyance caused to a teacher by his careless and inattentive students, or the distress caused to a guru by the misfortune of his disciples. However, a truly sincere guru equates and indeed experiences these three states of sorrow at one and the same time. Therefore, Kamal could not fully comprehend or actually understand through her own experience the condition and state of Anna Maharaj's mind. Nevertheless, what he had said was wholly true, so Kamal solemnly nodded her agreement.

"Kamal," said Anna Maharaj, changing the topic, "Today I wish to take down all the stars visible in the sky and place them in your hands."

"What a curious occurrence that will be," replied Kamal. "How can the stars of heaven be contained in my hands? My hands will prove too small for this," she added in awed wonder. Forming a hollow with both her hands Kamal gazed in bewilderment at both the sky and her hands in turn. What else could she possibly do other than look? Kamal stared at Anna Maharaj in eager impatience. And he, from where he sat, extended his hand above and taking a star from its

place in the heavens cast it into Kamal's palms. Just as birds peck indiscriminately at grain so Anna Maharaj quickly took the stars from their firmament. As soon as Anna Maharaj plucked a star and threw it into Kamal's open hands its structure would alter and it would take on the appearance of a piece of sugar candy, glistening and sparkling like a diamond it would land in Kamal's palm. Very soon all the twinkling stars ended up in Kamal's hands and not one remained in the sky above. Kamal's ananda swelled enormously above and beyond the sky itself on seeing those brilliantly dazzling gems in her hands. Witnessing this extraordinary skilful action of her gurumatha she considered herself fortunately blessed. Her eightfold pure sathwic feelings aroused she asked, "Anna Maharaj I am a foolish, uneducated, illiterate person but with what love you have done all this for me. I am far from worthy of all this even so your grace and mercy is so glorious that it is not possible for me to express it in words. I am wholly unaware of the true value of these stars or indeed of your eternal miracles. Nevertheless, you undergo great trouble and botheration to repeatedly explain and make me understand. I am very insignificant and ignorant."

"No, no Kamal. Do not consider yourself thus small and lacking. It appears a marvellous wonder to you that I plucked the stars from the Milky Way but do not consider the ability to contain them in your hands any less of a wonder! Had this not been so I could have given them into anyones hands but that cannot be! Just as food placed in silver vessels appears beautifully adorned and yet that same finesse is absent from earthenware utensils. Similarly, when one intends to pour love and wisdom into a vessel its eligibility is examined and determined before doing so. Otherwise, a heinous sin would be committed. So much power I have bestowed upon you and yet you consider yourself lowly and insignificant?" he queried.

"Anna Maharaj why have you removed all these stars?" asked Kamal.

"Look how supremely great is the power of this maha mantra japa. It is to reveal to you and to other people the incredible power of this maha mantra that I have done this because with this stupendous power it will not take me long to transform the sky into earth and the earth into sky. Since this afternoon you have been listening to this maha mantra and even now, if you go and look, you will see the same vision in each and every drop of water that you witnessed then," he replied.

Kamal rising went to the washroom and there, with the aid of a radiantly brilliant light, she saw the same scene in each and every drop of water. The same blackboard with Anna Maharaj seated in meditation next to it reciting the omkar. Having imprinted, in fascinated stupefaction, the entire vision minutely on her mind's canvas, she returned and sat down.

"Kamal, now form a garland of these stars and place it around my neck," said Anna Maharaj. On hearing this seemingly impossible to fulfil command Kamal felt absurdly foolish. A garland of stars? However, despite her disbelief, she did not question it. Silently and obediently requisitioning a needle and thread she formed a twinkling, bedazzling, splendourous garland of these sparkling, radiant stars which looked like sugar candy pieces and placed it around Anna Maharaj's neck. Kamal was tickled pink at being granted the opportunity to make such a supernatural other worldly garland. Happily Kamal went outside and saw that all was at once the

blackest of night. Only a blanket of pitch dark covered the night, and the heavens were destitute and devoid of their twinkling gems. How so? Because all the stars had been stolen.

“Anna, I cannot bear to look upon this beggarly condition of the sky. See how very dark and blind it has become? Why don’t you replace all the stars in their former places and let this scene become as it was before?” she said sadly.

“You are not to worry yourself about this for when it is my wish, I will do that work also. Now I’ll present you with some malas to do japa with. It is essential for you to do japa on the beads of these malas. You will do it, will you not?” he asked.

Kamal earnestly consented. Immediately there manifested between them a very large earthenware pot. It appeared to be full to the brim with tulsi malas. Seeing the quantity Kamal became alarmed. Was it actually possible to fulfil her obligation of doing japa on all these malas? This suspicion arose, bringing fear and dismay in its wake. However, she comforted herself with ‘Since the sadguru has commanded there should be no question of withdrawing. No matter how much time is involved this work must be completed’. Coming forward Kamal picked the topmost mala to then see a truly wondrous miracle; there was only one mala in the jar for it was now overflowing with padukas. Naturally the notion arose in her mind as to what was to be done with all these padukas.

“Do not be so startled. We will perform puja to these padukas. Go to the ashram and return with the flowers adorning Kaka Maharaj’s image there. I’ll await you here,” he said.

Just as Kamal rose to carry out her guru’s orders a conflagration of flames issued from the pot. Leaping high they licked the ceiling itself and within moments the large pot and flames had vanished into thin air. Kamal halted in her tracks as she wondered what to do.

“Did I order you to remain here or go to the ashram? Go quickly, return with the flowers,” said Anna Maharaj reinforcing his command summarily.

At this stern behest Kamal raced to the ashram and was about to remove the flowers decorating Kaka Maharaj’s image when she was confronted with Antu Mama (one of Anna Maharaj’s senior and aged disciples). Describing Anna Maharaj’s unusual attire, she asked whether he had ever had occasion to witness this aspect of their guru. He offered no reply, so Kamal proceeded to take the flowers. As she reverently lifted the first flower, her amazement abounded for beneath it was visible the afternoon’s vision. The same drain, below it the blackboard with Anna Maharaj in the depths of meditation, all exactly reproduced down to the minutest detail. Kamal was deeply perturbed for should anyone see this dirty water outlet before Kaka Maharaj’s image they would undeniably attribute it to Kamal’s presence. Kamal trembled in trepidation at this thought. Then recollecting Anna Maharaj’s bidding, she discarded her unworthy conclusions and removed another flower. Again, the same scene manifested in its place. Kamal swiftly lifted a load of flowers and under each one she was met with the same vision with Anna Maharaj seated peacefully therein. For a few moments she stared at this novel scene with

rapt interest. Unbelievably the whole mandir area before Kaka Maharaj's image was covered by this drain. And for this demeaningly, disgracefully dirty scene she was responsible! Kamal's whole frame trembled as this aspect of the situation presented itself to her. What a serious sinful crime if someone were to enter the mandir now! Looking helplessly towards Kaka Maharaj, Kamal implored him for mercy. So? This same lowly vision manifested over Kaka Maharaj's entire body!

Kamal's gaze inadvertently swept around the canopy. Her eyes were regaled with the sight of numerous people seated for bhajan which was now in progress. However, no one looked at or evinced any interest in her. Kamal perspired profusely at the thought of what would happen on conclusion of the bhajan when they would all converge upon the central area containing the images for aarthi. Finally, deciding it prudent to retire, Kamal backed out and quickly reached the outermost door. Had anyone seen her go? To ascertain and dissolve this nagging doubt she looked back and was rooted to the spot in astonishment for now she discerned Anna Maharaj seated amongst the bhajan singers, soulfully engaged in playing the harmonium, wearing his usual apparel and appearance. She was shocked for Anna Maharaj had categorically stated that he would await her at home. But now he was seated here! To disperse this contradiction she ran home, awed to find Anna Maharaj expectantly awaiting her return. What sort of illusion was this? Kamal promptly offered the flowers to Anna Maharaj.

"Anna what is all this? Only now I saw you in the mandir playing the harmonium in your usual form and yet you are seated here also in another guise. Anna, you must fulfil my desire to see both of these forms together," said Kamal consumed with curiosity.

"Accha, go to the back courtyard and climb up the wall there. I'll also stand by the same wall. From that wall you will be able to see both my form seated in the mandir and the form standing by the wall," replied Anna Maharaj.

They both went outside to the courtyard wall and Kamal climbed up. From this vantage point, as foretold by her guru, the entire scene in the mandir was clearly visible to her as was the form of her guru near the wall. Overcome by terror on viewing these two contradictions she fell from the wall, but she was unhurt. "Anna, how many of you are there altogether?" she asked.

"For thousands of devotees there are thousands of Annas. But you are puzzled and amazed on seeing only these two alone. All that you are seeing today is due to the miraculous glory of this mantra. I'll reveal another miracle to you which is also only possible due to the influence of this mantra. Look, now you will see this maha mantra boldly etched in large letters between that form of mine in the mandir and this one here," said Anna Maharaj.

As soon as Anna Maharaj finished speaking, indeed the maha mantra manifested in immensely large letters. It became difficult to sustain the sight for the words glared with a dazzling luminous florescence. Unaccountably Kamal felt her frame subjected to a current akin to an electric shock and she fell unconscious to the ground. Even in this helpless state she attempted to open her eyes. Finally rising, she tried to climb the wall again in an effort to see the vision in

its entirety. She realised that in her present weakened condition it was beyond her strength. Nevertheless, just as an ant puts forth its efforts in scaling a wall yet fails and tries again and again not relinquishing its resolve, so Kamal also courageously made repeated attempts. Ultimately, she succeeded in her endeavour. The majestic illustriousness of the maha mantra words was beyond all description. On a background of pure dazzling white brilliance, they flashed in a scintillating spangle of red and blue. It was impossible to stare continuously at this radiant luminosity for after two seconds the glare became unsustainable. This did nothing to diminish its magnetism.

“Why! Isn’t your mind yet fully satiated? Or do you wish to see more?” asked Anna Maharaj.

“My mind is not yet fully satisfied. However, the vision is unbearable to look upon,” replied Kamal honestly.

The divine vision vanished. Kamal and Anna Maharaj returned to the house. The spot recently vacated by the large earthenware pot was now occupied by an enormous Shivling.

“We will establish and inaugurate this Shivling at the place where you first witnessed the vision this afternoon and then we will worship it,” said Anna Maharaj before Kamal could raise a query.

They both carried the Shivling to the washroom and after setting it down appropriately, they ritually worshipped it. The flowers which Kamal had brought from the ashram’s Kaka Maharaj image they reverently offered to the Shivling during their puja. Anna Maharaj created rice grains, giving them to Kamal. Kamal duly offered them to the Shivling but a handful remained which she kept and they are in her possession today.

“From today this Shivling will appear every Shivaratri day at midnight and you are to conduct maha puja at that time,” enjoined Anna Maharaj.

Immediately the Shivling vanished. After conferring his supreme blessings and eternal benediction Anna Maharaj also disappeared. Whilst seriously contemplating the wisdom revealed to her by Anna Maharaj today, by utilising these unique experiences to unveil and exhibit the glory and supernatural power of the maha mantra, Kamal entered her house.

ANNA MAHARAJ

An introduction by Shakutai Datye

The Sai devotees reading this book are probably evincing an eager interest to know more about Kamal's guru Anna Maharaj. Hence the task of formulating an introduction to her guru, who is my father, has been relegated to me by my sister Sarla.

My father's (Kamal's and my guru) name was originally Ramchandra Yashvant Paranjape. By profession he was a learned physician (in the Hindu tradition) and a doctor. However, even today in Shetphale and various other places, where he is recognised, people refer to him as Anna Maharaj. Even in the book sister Sarla has employed this name. Therefore, by now the readers are well acquainted with this title. Anna Maharaj was born on 20th June 1911 in Ratnagiri Kankan (western ghats) within the Maharashtra state. His father and grandfather were eminent devotees of Bhagwat and were Jnanis and spiritual sadhaks. Therefore, it is a matter of no great marvel that Anna Maharaj, from childhood onwards, profited from spiritual beliefs, intimate associations, blessings and devotional practices, engaging himself in serious sadhana. From his childhood he used to read the autobiographies and religious texts composed by great saints such as Vivekananda, Ramakrishna Paramhansa and other books of saints written in marathi. He evinced a deep-rooted yearning to become a Vivekananda himself. With redoubtable resolution he tried to imitate these saints, living his life in accordance with their precepts and practices. Eschewing worldly standards, he set and achieved high ideals, living in accordance with their principles to the very end of his life.

As the years flew by, contrary to accepted norms, the magnetic pull of final beatitude, philosophy and salvation intensified to such a degree that on hearing the discourses of one Sachananda Saraswati in Bombay in 1931, he determined to enter the monastic order himself. Stubbornly insistent upon following this course he requested permission to stay with the aged sanyasin. Donning the saffron robes of sanyasihood and employing the customary begging bowl he began to live his life as a full renunciate. The elderly Maharaj offered the following advice, "Stay here for four months as it is chaitra mas and then we will see later."

After the agreed period, at the insistence of his family and exhortations of his brothers, he returned home without taking sanyas diksha (mantra from a guru). However, he was constantly perturbed, living in an incessant state of anxiety as the desperate yearning for a Godly and holy life would not allow him to rest in peace. The days were spent in sadhana and silence as he took to vows of non speech. Witnessing this solitary and spiritual state of his son, his father finally realised that he would never be immersed in or take part in worldly affairs or occupations. He arrived at the sensible conclusion that his son should be given the opportunity to search for his guru. Thereafter it would be easier for him to accept whatever lifestyle his guru commanded him to live. So, he set his son free. What did he require? Anna Maharaj, joyfully taking two items of clothing and five rupees, left home two days before the Diwali festival. With an all-consuming desire he searched for his guru and the company of other sadhus and saints, roaming the whole of the Maharashtra state in his endeavours. After wandering from place to place he eventually came to rest at Shetphale. There, in the company of Govind Kaka and his long-lived disciple Vasudev

Mama (who is referred to as Mama Maharaj in the book), by their darshan and grace, Anna Maharaj was blessed with the supreme prasad of true wisdom and devotion. All dharmas, sects and religions met in the one Bhagvat dharma. Into that Bhagvat Sanathana dharma he entered, from whence the naturally innate valid wisdom penetrated and in turn the pure rays radiated from his heart. Remaining at the feet of his guru, he practised severe sadhanas and austerities until finally, on the injunction of his guru, he went home and accepted life as a householder. On returning home he coped remarkably well with worldly affairs and his profession as a doctor. Notwithstanding this, his innate internal nature retained its purity and attachment to the search for salvation. It was his unchanging eternal state. When Mama Maharaj concluded his life's journey, he enjoined Anna Maharaj to follow in his footsteps and tradition. So, Anna Maharaj, accepting this order with alacrity, moved permanently to Shetphale. Even today his disciples number well over twelve hundred. Anna Maharaj's pure and chaste thoughts and ideas were bound together with the holy thread of genuine practised disciplines and sadhanas. He had the scholarly habit of following to its ultimate end and conclusion any query. Not until such time as it was fully and satisfactorily answered would he relinquish his quest. It accounted for the effective influence of his discourses which were based on experience and intuitive knowledge.

Once, a Sai devotee of Ratnagiri gave Anna Maharaj a book on Sathya Sai Baba to read. Anna Maharaj was disinclined to pay undue attention to it and so he did not bother to read it properly. But on his next visit to Ratnagiri, he was approached by another Sai devotee who expressed a desire to hear a discourse on Sai Baba. Now Anna Maharaj was obliged to make use of the book. Initially he collected a number of books on Sai Baba and then proceeded to read them systematically. As he delved deeper into the essence inherent in them, he experienced an immeasurably unsurpassable degree of delight, earnest impatience and ananda. In those days Anna Maharaj was subject to a slight defect in his sight which meant that with strained difficulty he could barely manage to read some five to six pages a day. However, unbelieving, while he was engaged in reading Baba's books, he experienced no such problems or the attendant pain. This appeared to him as a decided miracle. After he had finished reading the books, one day during a state of deep meditation he clearly heard the following words:

"He who was Ram and he who was Krishna, He, Himself, is before you now. I have no form, no name. There are no distinctions of mine and thine in Me. Wherever and in whichever form you call upon Me there I will come in response to your prayers, answer them and listen to your pleas. I only work for the welfare of mankind. All places are within the scope of My reach. No one can stop or hinder Me. My coming is for the re-establishment and uplift of the Sanathana Dharma and this task I will undeniably fulfil. No one can stop Me or My work. No power is beyond My limits. No jnani or devotee can comprehend My total majestic glory no matter how long and hard they try. It's an impossibility."

Anna Maharaj gave the much-desired lecture while mentally offering his prayers to Baba. Following this Anna Maharaj invariably spoke on Baba, explaining at length, teaching and introducing his disciples to Sathya Sai Baba. Whenever and wherever his devotees and disciples assembled he would delineate on the infinite glory and miraculous illustriousness of Baba. He was fully convinced and established in the truth that 'Baba is God incarnate'. He had an eager desire that his disciples should be graced with Baba's darshan as quickly as possible. What

reliance can one place on time? Such a beautiful, golden opportunity should not be lost. In fact, he would repeatedly advise, “We should consider ourselves truly fortunate and blessed because Baba is on this earth with us today. God incarnate is amongst us. We can touch His feet and witness shakshatkar His eternal never ending leelas. By touching His feet, we can liberate ourselves from our sins and sorrows. By singing His glory in bhajans our tongue and mouth become perfect and faultless. Our ears are made chaste and virtuous by hearing of His mahimas and miracles. By reminiscing upon Him our mind and intellect is cleansed and made sacred. There is no limit, no counting our good fortune. With immeasurable love Baba has come for our sake but some people have become the victims of doubt. They view this diamond mine form of Baba’s with distrust and scepticism. They criticise and condemn Him. Remember always that life is short and that there is no guarantee of life or when death will strike therefore immediately take refuge at Baba’s lotus feet and become liberated.”

To plant the love-soaked seed of devotion to Baba in the minds of the people of Shetphale and his other disciples Anna Maharaj had to labour industriously. In time an earnest and intense yearning, unquenchable thirst 1969 he made his first pilgrimage to Puttaparthi. Once there he sat in the darshan lines. When Baba appeared for darshan He went straight towards Anna Maharaj and took him alone for an interview. “Swami’s full grace is upon you,” said Baba. “You possess full and complete wisdom. Your love and devotion will ever increase.”

Baba then created a quantity of vibhuti, part of which He Himself rubbed onto Anna Maharaj’s stomach and part He offered him to eat. The enigmatic purpose behind this was not understood at that time, only later. A year or two later Anna Maharaj suffered from a severe attack of polio. Afflicted and tortured by the serious aspect of this disease it appeared fatal to the doctors who despaired of a recovery. However, it was then that the latent effects and influence of namasmaran and bhajans revealed themselves for Anna Maharaj miraculously recovered full health. Baba’s act of massaging the vibhuti onto Anna Maharaj’s stomach now became significant and was understood by all as Baba’s mysterious way of counteracting future events. Now Anna Maharaj commenced teaching his disciples about Baba with renewed earnestness and vigour. “Baba is imparting and teaching our Bhagvat Dharma in His own sweet inimitable style. To know God and to love Him is dearly beloved by the guru. If your devotion to the guru is sincere and true then clasp forever Baba’s feet and with His darshan acquire and win complete bliss and love,” Anna Maharaj would say.

Anna Maharaj belonged to and became utterly Baba’s. He would continuously discourse only on Baba, His works and His glory. His public discourse centred around Baba alone. In fact out of his supreme love for the Lord he has composed many poems. It became his undeviating practice to conduct bhajans regularly every Thursday, singing beautifully himself and instructing his disciples in this highly refined art. Anna Maharaj plunged wholeheartedly, immersed and submerged himself in devotion and love for Baba. On 10th October 1983 Anna Maharaj was admitted into hospital suffering from a heart attack. Nevertheless, even though facing death himself, he enjoined all the visiting disciples thus: “Do not ever release Baba’s feet. Taking Baba’s love and devotion as a support, I am prepared for my final journey. Since Baba is with me

all is blissful bliss. Do not sit here engaged in futile meaningless gossip. Sing bhajans and joyfully chant His name for.

Kal aamhasi aaala khau aami anande nachu gaun.

Death is spreading it's jaws but we will continue our
rejoicing with joy and bliss. (An Abhang of Namdev)

Whilst the devotees reverently served him as he lay peacefully all they could hear was the ceaseless chant of 'Sai Ram, Sai Ram'. Finally, on 15th October 1983 the flame of Anna Maharaj's life force merged and was absorbed in the Sai form.

Shakutai Datye

GLOSSARY

Aarthi	Worship and praise of God with camphor flame.
Abhang	Hymn or poem, song in praise or God.
Accha	Yes, ok, fine.
Ananda	Divine bliss.
Ashram	Hermitage, monastery where spirituality is practised.
Archana	Ritual worship with rice.
Arjun	Friend, companion and foremost devotee of Sri Krishna
Atma	The soul, spark of the divine resident in all.
Avatar	Incarnation of God in human form.
Bal	Child.
Besan Laddu	Sweet made from gram flour.
Bhagvat	Book on the glory of God.
Bhagawan	The Lord, God.
Bhajans	Songs extolling the divine.
Bhakthi	Devotion, the path of love to God.
Brahmananada	Unchanging eternal bliss.
Bramchari	A celibate
Brahmin	Highest caste, usually priests, pandits.
Charan	Holy feet of a saint or God.
Charan sparsh	Touching of the holy feet.
Chevra	Savoury snack.
Chit Chora	Heart stealer, usually a term applied to Krishna.
Damaru	Small drum carried by Lord Shiva.
Darshan	Sight of a holy person, saint.
Dassera	10th day of Navaratri, a day of victory of good over evil.
Dattatreya	An avatar, incarnation of an aspect of the divine.
Deepavali, Diwali	Festival of lights, celebrates the victory of good.
Dharma	The path of righteousness and right conduct.
Dhoti	Draped trousers worn by men.
Dwapara age	In the Hindu calendar there are 4 ages: Sathya yuga, Treta, Dwapara, and Kaliyuga.
Ekadashi	The 11th day of the lunar fortnight.
Ganesh, Ganapati	Lord Shiva's son. Worshipped as the remover obstacles.
Gopal	Name of Sri Krishna.
Gopika's, Gopa's	Cowherds and maids. Devotees of Sri Krishna.
Guru	Spiritual teacher and guide
Guru mantra	Sacred chant given to the aspirant by the guru.
Gurumatha	Guru, the mother.
Haldi	Tumeric powder used in worship and cooking.
Halwa	Sweet pudding made of semolina, ghee and sugar.
Hanuman	The courageous and devoted devotee of Lord Rama.
Janak Raja	Father of Mother Sita.
Japa	Repetition of the Lord's name.
Jnaneshar	A famous saint.
Jnani	Wise person who has knowledge of divinity.
Kafni	Long robe worn by Sai Baba.
Karthika	The first son of Lord Shiva.
Kumkum	Red powder used in worship, considered auspicious.

Kurta	Indian shirt, shorter version of the kafni.
Laxman	Brother of Lord Rama.
Leela	Divine play of the lord.
Ramleela	Drama depicting the story of the Ramayana.
Maha Mantra	Highest, supreme chant.
Mahadev	Lord Shiva.
Mahimas	A miracle which reveals the glory of God.
Mala	Rosary made up of 108 beads.
Mandir	Temple.
Mani	Central bead in a rosary representing the oversoul, God.
Maruti	Another name of Hanuman.
Maya	The illusionary power of God.
Moorthi	Statue, usually of a deity.
Mousumbi	An orange.
Murali	Lord Krishna's flute.
Naradji	The son of Brahma.
Namaskar	The homage of prostration.
Naivdhya	Offering of food to God.
Navaratri	The nine day celebration of good over evil.
Narayana	The primal person, the creator.
Namasmaran	Chanting of the Lord's name.
Narsi Metha	Imminent saint of India.
Naag Devta	The cobra (snake) accepted as representing Shiva.
Naagraj	Same.
Narasimha	Half man, half lion avatar of the Lord.
Namdev	A saint.
Om tat sat	That is the truth, I am the truth, the truth is one.
Padnamaskar	Touching of the holy feet.
Paduka puja	Worship of the holy feet.
Pagali	Madcap, an affectionate term.
Parasurama	Partial avatar, during Lord Rama's time.
Pandurang	Lord Krishna.
Pipal	Banyan tree.
Pitamber	The silk garment worn by the Lord as a lower robe.
Pranams	Offering one's respect by folding of hands, obeisance.
Pratyaksh	The actual physical presence of God.
Prasad	Food which has been offered to God.
Ravana	A demon king whom Lord Rama took birth to destroy.
Prasanthi Nilayam	Sri Baba's ashram. The abode of highest peace.
Puja	Ritual worship of the Lord.
Purantha	The knowledge of and self realisation.
Purushotam	The sovereign purusha, the Lord of all.
Radha	Foremost of the Gopi's
Raksha Bhandan	Special day for brothers and sisters.
Ramayana	Story of Lord Rama's life.
Ramphal	A fruit.
Rishi	A sage, one who has no attachment to this world.
Rudraksha	A bead of which rosaries are made.

Rukmani	Consort of Sri Krishna.
Sadhana	Practice of spiritual disciplines.
Sadguru	Supreme teacher of wisdom.
Saligram	Special stone worshipped as Lord Vishnu.
Samadhi	The final resting place of a saint.
Samsar	The objective world, worldly existence.
Sant	Saint or person who has renounced the world.
Sathyam	Truth.
Sathybhama	A wife of Sri Krishna.
Sathvic	Pure, pious, good qualities.
Shakti	Universal energy, feminine aspect of God.
Shakshatkar	Actual physical presence of God.
Shanker	Name of Lord Shiva.
Shastric	From the ancient scriptures of India, the shastra's.
Shirdi Sai Baba	Previous avatar of the Lord.
Shiva	God of the Hindu trinity.
Shivam	Auspiciousness.
Shivling	The oval form representing the formless God.
Sita	Consort of Lord Rama.
Sitaphal	Custard apple.
Sloka	Sanskrit stanzas, from religious texts.
Sparsh	Touch.
Sri Krishna	Avatar of the Lord.
Sri Rama	Avatar of the Lord
Sri Sai Baba	Present incarnation of the Lord on earth. Sudarshan Chakra Lord Vishnu's discus.
Srutis	The Vedas, sound. The words of God.
Sundram	Beauty.
Triputi Balaji	A form of Sri Krishna.
Tirth	Holy water.
Trishul	Trident of Lord Shiva, representing the past, present, future.
Tulsi	Sacred basil plant.
Tulsidas	A saint who wrote the Ramayana.
Tukaram	A saint.
Udhava	One of Sri Krishna's foremost devotees.
Varmala	The ceremony of garlanding, conducted during marriage.
Vedas	Ancient religious holy texts of India.
Vibhuti	Sacred ash materialised by Sai Baba.
Viswaswarup	The universal form of the Lord.
Virat moorthi	Same.
Viratrup	Same.
Vrindavan	The place of Sri Krishna's leelas.
Yasoda	The foster mother of Sri Krishna.

